EGO 2

being
a second instalment
of a contemporary diary
(from 7th August 1934
to 24th June 1936)
by

JAMES AGATE

EGO 2

MY BOOKS

Novels

RESPONSIBILITY
BLESSED ARE THE RICH
GEMEL IN LONDON

Belles-Lettres

L. OF C. (LINES OF COMMUNICATION)
FANTASIES AND IMPROMPTUS
WHITE HORSE AND RED LION
ON AN ENGLISH SCREEN
AGATE'S FOLLY
THE COMMON TOUCH
A SHORT VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE
PLAYGOING
KINGDOMS FOR HORSES

Essays of the Theatre

BUZZ, BUZZ!
ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS
AT HALF-PAST EIGHT
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1923
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1924
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1925
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1926
THEIR HOUR UPON THE STAGE
MY THEATRE TALKS
FIRST NIGHTS

Biography

RACHEL

Anthology

THE ENGLISH DRAMATIC CRITICS, 1660–1932

Autobiography

EGO

Photo : Coster

The Author

EGO 2

BEING MORE OF

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

JAMES AGATE

" Donnez-moi un remède pour la fatigue, mais que ce remède ne soit pas le repos."

L. HOCHE

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To

MY BROTHER

EDWARD AGATE

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NOTE

This second instalment of my Diary begins where the first instalment leaves off. The last date in EGO is July 17th, 1934. The first date in EGO 2 is August 7th of the same year. Posterity will kindly overlook the gap.

1934

Aug. 7 *Tuesday.* Whitby, for summer holiday. This means that between now and the end of the month have only seventeen articles to write, all the new books to look at, and the new plays and films to visit.

Having trouble with the Autobiography.[1] First, the title. Have considered and rejected a lot including *Bring Me My Spear*, from Blake, of course. Monty Shearman suggested *Loud Bassoon* (Coleridge) and if the book had been a novel I should have adopted this. Good title for Rosamond Lehmann. Have so far fixed on *Insubstantial Pageant*. Another book in, say five years' time, to be called *Pageant Fading*, and finally a gentle, melancholy volume, *Pageant Faded*.

Also difficulty with publishers. What a publishing history is mine ! I began with Constable and was then seduced by Grant Richards's eyeglass. Next Collins and then Parsons, The Bodley Head, Chapman and Hall, Cape, Jenkins, Harrap, Jarrold, The Mandarin Press, Howe, Barker, and Elkin Mathews. That makes fourteen, and I daresay I have forgotten some. I must be the most successful author who has never had a success ! The new book has been turned down by Ivor Nicholson, also Cassell, and at the moment is in the hands of Hamish Hamilton. I met Hamilton at the party given at the Gargoyle to launch Eiluned Lewis's book about her childhood. E. L. lured me to this party under the solemn promise of champagne.

Aug. 8 *Wednesday.* My brother Harry and his family are here. Tells me he caught a local fish called a " billet," which he had cooked by his landlady. When

[1] *Ego*, published in January, 1935.

served he said it " looked like the wrong side of a pull-over and tasted like a mixture of privet hedge and boric lint."

Aug. 11 *Saturday.* Spa concert. Surely the one composer the English really like ought to be called Chuchinchowski? Years ago I took Edmée, when we were first married, to that pantomime. She said, " You English are an odd race. You make a joke of war, and take this seriously ! "

Aug. 12 *Sunday.* Flamborough Head. I said to one of the boatmen: " I suppose this is where people fall off ? " He replied, " Odd times," and went on sucking at his pipe. Went out in a small motor-launch and a hideously choppy sea to look at the King and Queen rocks. Over-rated pleasure.

Aug. 13 *Monday.* A sea like Tosti's " Good-bye." Have played some fair golf with the little pro. here. A nice fellow, name of Crook, with only one serviceable eye. He had a grand set of clubs, which are now mine.

Aug. 16 *Thursday.* George Robey, who is playing at Scarborough, came to lunch. I 'phoned Peter Derwent to make up a bachelor party, but the butler taking the message and misinterpreting it three of them arrived. One was a man staying with the Derwents, very pleasant and intelligent but looking like one of Francis Sullivan's screen-villains. The second was Peter. The third was Lady Derwent, a Roumanian and a ferocious highbrow. Peter, who writes enchanting books about Mérimée and Rossini, strikes me as being wildly out of his element at Hackness, and as much startled by his cows as they are by his lordship.

Aug. 21 *Tuesday.* Autobiography accepted by Hamish Hamilton, and I get £200 on account of royalties.

Went South and set off for short jaunt with Leo Pavia. The old thing is more unprintably witty than ever. Spent our first night at Bexhill-on-Sea. (The turn of this sentence reminds me of a Shakespearean postcard Bruce Winston once wrote to Sybil Thorndike: " Lay last night with your

husband at Tewkesbury.") Filthy hole, dull and, I gather, purse-proud. After dinner sat on the front in a green alcove rather like an outdoor setting for *Much Ado*, and watched a worn moon preside over a green sea and a silver taffrail. Nobody passed. Complained of this to girl at hotel cash-desk who said icily: " How many people do you require ? " Collected luggage and left Bexhill.

Aug. 22 *Wednesday.* Could not get in at Hastings where the architectural style, according to Leo, is divided between Early Wedding Cake and Late Water Closet. Failed to find accommodation at Littlehampton, so declined on Worthing. Hotel very dull, except for the presence of my mother's oldest friend's niece. The aunt, who was at Heidelberg with my mother, and was a great Victorian beauty, is well over eighty ! Slept in lounge after dinner while Leo perused a *History of Edinburgh* (1861), a three months' old number of *Yachting* and the March issue of *The Hockey World.* Leo said that perhaps this isn't a world that changes much. Went up to bed and feeling wakeful read the last act of *Antony and Cleopatra.* Oddly enough this is one of Ivor Brown's favourite plays. Strange that this mind of Aberdeen granite should cotton to the metallic clangour of the verse, which always seems to me to be beaten out in copper. Ivor particularly likes:

> in his livery
> Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
> As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

My own favourite is Iras's hint to Cleopatra to leave that mean argument with Cæsar, and come to the business in hand:

> Finish, good lady; the bright day is done,
> And we are for the dark.

Aug. 23 *Thursday.* Pass-book from Bank. Fair. Motored to Steyning and bought a walking-stick said to have belonged to the Emperor Franz Josef and stolen by an Austrian waiter. Do not believe in legend but the stick is worth the pound I gave for it.

Sorry to hear of the death of Nigel Playfair. An odd

combination of business man and artist. At one time he had a cottage at Sandwich and invited me for the week-end. I was to meet him on the first tee at St. George's, and I went down in a tremendous state of excitement, never having played there. On the tee I found a bunch of people, and we started to play a fivesome! After four holes Nigel opened a small wicket-gate leading off the course and said: "I see my wife beckoning, James. This is where we have tea!" Were ever hopes so dashed? The Lyric venture owed its success to a fluke. *Abraham Lincoln* was playing to empty houses until one night W. J. Rea fell ill and Drinkwater played his part. The evening papers got hold of it, and the house was full. Then Rea returned and the house continued full until the end of the run. But for this, it is doubtful whether the *Beggar's Opera* would ever have been put on. Playfair did a great deal for the theatre, whereas du Maurier, while doing nothing whatever for the drama, did immense things for the profession.

Aug. 25 *Saturday.* Three days of good golf at Littlehampton. Leo described the *Man of Aran* film as the last word in tedium. Must they live there? Can't they go and live somewhere else? All this on the shingle at midnight watching an ebbing tide that Leo was mortally afraid might turn capricious, flow and engulf him.

Spent yesterday afternoon visiting the little chapels at Horsham and Billingshurst. Scores of Agates and Eversheds and Dendys buried there. Mood very much that of Gray's Elegy, "th' inevitable hour," and all the rest of it.

In the evening went casually round to the local Repertory Theatre, *and couldn't get in.* Packed out for *Ten Minute Alibi.* Here's me, sick of first nights in London, turned away from a sea-side theatre. And a repertory one, too!

Aug. 26 *Sunday.* Caught one of those summer colds and have had to give up to-day's golf. Very peeved about this as yesterday afternoon, receiving four bisques from young Harry Riseborough, the son of the Littlehampton pro., I beat him by 7 and 6, and had promised him his revenge. The new irons I bought at Whitby are doing marvellously.

I cull this out of Hubert Griffith's column. He is writing about Nigel Playfair:

> He was accused—though it should be complimented—of picking people's brains. The business of an impresario *is* to pick people's brains, as long as he picks good brains and picks them well.

If this is to be said at all it should be supported by facts. Now here is one. At some Hammersmith first night Nigel sent word to me that he would like to see me in his office after the performance. I duly waited on him and found that what he wanted was a suitable young actor to play Armand Duval to Tallulah's Marguerite in his forthcoming revival of *La Dame aux Camélias*. After a lot of discussion I suggested Byam Shaw who was, I believe, finally chosen. Then I said: " If you haven't cast Prudence, what about my sister May? I don't know whether she played it with Sarah or not, but she certainly saw the other woman scores of times and knows all the tradition. Anyhow, I myself saw her give a very fine performance of Prudence in English in Stella Arbenina's production." And then I found that Playfair was just not listening. It would have been all right if he had said " My dear Agate, Prudence is cast." But it wasn't. Nigel had got what he wanted out of me, and that was that! Later on, when he saw May act, he wrote me a charming letter saying how good she had been, and how unlike herself in private life. In the end Prudence was played by one of the Hammersmith crowd, who made the part just about as French as Mrs. Peachum. May made it a wonderful assemblage of *simagrées* and *minauderies*.

We go back to London after lunch to-day, and my holiday is over. Am living at Barnet, having let my London flat to George Mathew.

Aug. 31 *Friday.* Bad cold all week. Read and delighted by Graham Robertson's *Time Was*. Magnificent close-hand descriptions of Irving and Sarah. Not just vague rhapsody, but an account of how their muscles and even the pores of their skin worked to create and give the illusion.

Letter in *The Daily Express* calling James Douglas a

" trousered sobsister." Christiansen said that the credit for this must be given to St. John Adcock, the literary editor of the *D. E.* who invented it. Superb !

Leo having been slightly damaged by a motor-car in getting off a bus at Hammersmith, Edgar Jepson said in his dry, precise way: " I suppose Pavia will insist upon £5 a week compensation for being unable to pursue the profession of occasional pianist which he relinquished in Edwardian times." Leo said it was good of Edgar to say " Edwardian."

Letter from Lionel Fielden:

Broadcasting House,
London. W. 1.

DEAR JAMES,

I think (though I am not sure until I have consulted my solicitor) that your letter constitutes blackmail. Still, how far can the mentioned dictate his own mention for £5 ? None of the great (to whom I have been always so amiable) has ever mentioned me in a book, except Arnold Bennett, with whom my glorious record rests simply: " Dined with Lionel *Feilding*." The mis-spelling is more annihilating than anything else could possibly have been. Your successor is Desmond MacCarthy for the moment, a good choice you'll allow, if he ever goes to a theatre, which is doubtful. But I am Gallio. I no longer rule a department. I never could, you see, get my staff to attend punctually, or write letters and memoranda of a becoming dignity. And I was chiefly interested in broadcasting, which is of course fatal to promotion. So now Mr. Guy Pocock rules in my stead. And Mr. Coatman of the Indian Police directs the news, and I am " personal assistant " to the Director of Talks, my duties (on paper, which I have framed) being to:

(a) Listen to all talks programmes i.e. 11 a.m., 11.15 a.m., 2 p.m., 2.30 p.m., 3 p.m., 3.30 p.m., 6.45 p.m., 7.5 p.m., 9.20 p.m., 10.15 p.m., and others and comment on same.
(b) Attend all rehearsals (which take place all day long).
(c) Reorganize the presentation of news (from 6 p.m. till midnight).
(d) Have a daily conference with the Director of Talks.
(e) Have PLENTY OF TIME for " outside contacts."
(f) Contribute, as usual, a few new ideas every week.

Well, well. I enjoy my country cottage very much between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. I shall miss you this autumn. I expect we shall have you back with us before long. Sorry you don't care for our light entertainment. Not my job and I don't hear it much, but I think it's better than it used to be. Come in and see me sometime when you are around the mausoleum.

Yours,

LIONEL.

I called on Fielden a day or two later and he asked me to sign a copy of my *Theatre Talks*. I wrote: " To the engaging Lionel, who has given up engaging me ! "

Sept. 11 *Tuesday.* Absurd play at the Westminster entitled *Rose and Glove* by the Editor of *The Bookman*. This is Marlowe's *Edward II* re-written to prove that there was, in Stalky's phrase, " no beastly Ericking " about the King and Piers Gaveston. *The Times* critic said that the author was entitled to telescope history and re-interpret it. I think I must now write a play to prove that Nero went behind the scenes at circuses for intellectual conversation, and another to show that fire descended upon Sodom because the inhabitants refused to pay income-tax. Some years ago, being at Warwick, I went to see the monument to Piers Gaveston put up by, of all people, Mr. Siddons ! It is in a wood and I couldn't find it. Coming into the town I passed a villa residence with a charming lawn and two gate-posts to the drive. On the lawn was a double-perambulator fully tenanted, and on one gate-post was " Piers," on the other, " Gaveston."

Sept. 12 *Wednesday.* Received this from Edith Sitwell:

Rue Saint-Dominique,
Paris VIIe.
11*th September,* 1934.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Why, naturally I shall be delighted for my letter about Mytton to appear in your book of reminiscences.

I should have written to you much sooner, but no letters

were forwarded to me as I was motoring about France. Before that, I was at Brides-les-Bains, a scene of much desolation, and the temporary haunt of people who have eaten so much that nature has supervened, and driven them to this desert where they can eat nothing. Here, my brother Osbert and I were much afflicted by the conversation of a Swiss lady who babbled of D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley. Eventually, she asked me if I wrote under my own name, and if she ought to have heard of me. This annoyed me—it shows how conceited I am—and I replied: " I do, and you could not have heard of me. But my brother writes under the name of Clemence Dane." Unfortunately, the news spread like wildfire, and the Swiss lady, clasping her hands and turning up her eyes, kept on saying: " How *great* she is, your Dane ! She is great as your Barrie ! She is great as your Galsworthy, or your Walpole ! " Told everybody. So that Osbert, looking very angry, sat surrounded by quite a little court of admirers of *Will Shakespeare.* He was perfectly furious, especially when photographers tried to take snapshots of him for the English newspapers. On one occasion, to my unconcealed delight, the Swiss lady, who was the high priestess of his admirers, spoke of him as the Great Dane. She is going to marry an Englishman and live in England, so there will be an awful scandal—especially as I have told her that *Will Shakespeare* was the result of automatic writing, and that Osbert wrote it in his sleep and must not be questioned about it as the doctor says the shock will be too much for his brain if he finds he has written it. This was because she wanted him to give a reading. I told her a lot about " literary life " in England. Oh, a lot ! I have never met Miss Dane, but hear on all sides that she is a delightful woman, so I hope this scandal will not touch her too nearly.

Yours sincerely,
EDITH SITWELL.

Sept. 16 *Sunday.* Am writing this in a hotel smoking-room at Brighton, whither I have come with George Mathew. Keats's own words about George's great-grandfather: " An Elegant, Pure and Aerial Mind: George Felton Mathew." And this passage occurs in the essay " Friends of Keats " in Edmund Blunden's *Votive Tablets*:

Photo : Coster

George Felton Mathew

Mr. A. Edward Newton, in his *Amenities of Book-Collecting*, mentions that he is the great-grand-nephew of George Felton Mathew, and knew his sister, " who as a young girl had known Keats well." Many are the byways of contact with Keats, and his intense radiance adds a value to facts otherwise trifling. Is it not a dramatic moment when, looking at the visitors' book at Keats House, one sees a modest signature, " George Felton Mathew " ?

The windows of this room cannot have been opened for ten years. I use a heavy Victorian writing-table which wobbles. G. M. and I dined with Harry Preston, who also had as his guests a Mr. and Mrs. X. . . . Mrs. X . . . spoke at length of her former likeness to Princess May, and Mr. X . . . presented me, at table there and then, with a volume of good stories he has compiled. George looking as only he can look when these things are perpetrated, the waiter was despatched to Mr. X . . .'s bedroom for another copy of the work which was then presented to George. Later, both volumes were solemnly inscribed: " Paradise belongs to him who makes his companions laugh.—The Talmud." George says that this book must be the only link between the Children of Israel and the Wee Frees. Sat and watched H. P. dance with Lady P. Later H. P. danced with lots of people, while Lady P. gazed affectionately at the dapper worldling and *bébé rose* who, the previous evening, had been put to bed at six o'clock with bread and milk.

The last fortnight has been a hell of second-thoughts for the Autobiography. It has now gone to the printers, thank Heaven, and with Jock's notion of *Ego* for title ! A little change forthcame when I went up to Littleborough Show and saw Smokeless Diamond beat Barcroft Belle, the champion pony. Stayed with Fritz Dehn, whose mother at seventy-odd is still a remarkable woman. She said of another old lady who had been ill: " Why must she make all this fuss? She's just had a stroke like anybody else ! " And she herself had one less than a year ago ! As I was leaving, this valiant and typical German mother said: " Don't delay the Autobiography; I may be dead before January." To which I replied: " In that case I'll send

you on a copy." This tickled her mightily. Motored back through Chapel-en-le-Frith where they showed me the programme of a Horse Show I once got up there. This was in 1912 and the animals that came to the show included Mel Valley's Véronique, Belle Melbourne, and Grand Vulcan. Spent the afternoon in the car " bunthing," a word derived from Gilbert's Bunthorne, and used by Jock[1] and me to denote nostalgia.

There has been the usual attempt by everybody *not* connected with the play to rush me with *The Shining Hour*. This is about a Yorkshire farmer who wins jumping prizes at the horse-shows and plays Rachmaninoff concertos, and his Yorkshire wife who commits suicide in order that her husband may go off with another woman. I just wouldn't have this, to the great annoyance, doubtless, of everybody connected with the play. Priestley's new piece, *Eden End*, I think is true to life and very good indeed. I imagine it will be a failure.

Lunched one day with Hamilton, who said he was sending me Ivor Brown's pastiche of *Candide*. I said, " You'd better send *Candide* as well ! "

Ivor Nicholson and Watson have sent me an advance copy of *First Nights*. It looks extremely well. Bound in primrose, with a blue and gold label.

Played golf at Littlehampton yesterday with young Riseborough who gave me four bisques and a trouncing. Motoring through Shoreham and passing one of those stores which deal in everything, I saw two advertisements in juxtaposition: " Undertaking " and " Down Quilts." Which prompted me to murmur:

> Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
> Nor the furious winter's rages.

Sept. 17 *Monday.* Lunched at the Albion yesterday and insisted upon being allowed to pay. Among the lunchers was Seymour Hicks complaining that they had given him a too large and therefore property lobster from Drury Lane. Also A. W. Baskcomb, who has recovered from his stroke to the extent of being able to walk with a stick. But he cannot make himself understood though he tries hard. It is

[1] Jock, who occurs *passim*, is my secretary, Alan Dent.

pitiful that this superb portrayer of melancholy should come to this plight and, I fear, end.

A grand game in the afternoon with young Riseborough. R. gave me four bisques. I won the first three holes and lost the next three. Then the match went ding-dong to the fifteenth, by which time I stood one up with all bisques gone. At the sixteenth I missed a two foot putt to become dormy, the ball sidling away as if it was bewitched. At the seventeenth I holed a twelve yard putt and so became dormy one. This unnerved the boy who hit a poor drive while I got mine away superbly. R. then hit a brassie within six yards of the pin. This unnerved me, and I cut my mashie shot slightly so that the ball, pitching on the green, ran all round the right-hand bunker before toppling in. I got out too well and so the match was halved. An exciting game, a good, modest young pro., and a lovely day.

Sept. 18 *Tuesday.* *Antony and Cleopatra* last night at the Old Vic. Wilfrid Lawson miscast, and Mary Newcombe a clever portrait of a neurotic American lady ante-dated a couple of thousand years. Kept thinking of Louis Calvert and Janet Achurch and how grand they had been at the old Queen's Theatre in Manchester when I was a boy. Or was it *the play* which made its terrific impact on me? I remember inducing my father to go to see Achurch, and how angry I was when he said she was an amateur. In Manchester they had plenty of incense, and Iras was black and lay on her stomach throughout. At the Old Vic. Iras and Charmian were like two little things from some dance hall.

Have reviewed Grant Richards's *Author Hunting*. When I came to London after the war Gerald Cumberland, whose name when I went to school with him was Freddie Kenyon—we divided the singing prize!—scouted for him. G. C. got me away from Constable, who had published *L. of C.*, by fantastic promises about sales.

Sept. 19 *Wednesday.* I hear that Lilian Braithwaite came off the stage the other night after *Family Affairs* clutching her throat and with an expression

of Phaedra-like anguish. Asked what was wrong she said tremulously: " The humour of this play is choking me ! "

Sept. 20 *Thursday.* Gertrude Lawrence in Clemence Dane's new play, *Moonlight in Silver*. Good acting, poor play. Took Helen Haye to supper at Savoy. A clever and nice woman. Said she had come to the conclusion that courage, or virtue in the Roman sense, was the great thing. Has an enormous sense of fun which does us both good. Introduced to a pleasant American, one Francis L. Kohlman, who told me to my face I was the best dramatic critic living. I said " Why not ' who ever lived ' ? " Anyhow he told me he was writing *The Sunday Times* to tell them to send him the paper every week to New York on account of me ! That's the stuff !

Sept. 21 *Friday.* Tait and Allott's new play *The Prickly Pear* arrived. Also letter from a young woman at Merstham asking if I could tell her the name of a manager likely to consider a light comedy about Eskimos !

Dame Madge Kendal is a fly old bird. I wrote asking leave to publish in my Autobiography a letter from her about Victorian stays and bustles. She demanded to see it, so I sent a copy. Now comes this:

September 1934.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

I never wrote that letter—*you* wrote it, and I signed it—under the spell of a cocktail—which I have never taken. May I see the original ? Or will you come and see me ?—the reputation of the " Early Victorians " is a grave matter—they were *such fools*—I don't think.

What an amusing period to live in—all medicos tell me that the first sign of lunacy is taking your clothes *off*——

Poor England !—and four hundred " nudists " met for a conference !—last week. Dogberry was right—" so write me down an ass " too.

Kind greetings—

MADGE K. GRIMSTON.

Sept. 24 *Monday.* Took Meads, the Barnet photographer, to Birmingham to photograph the horses. Tulip made a marvellous show, which he caught, but Diamond

no good for camera purposes. Meads is a jolly fellow, six foot four in height, who hangs out of aeroplanes by his ankles, unstrapped, to take aerial views with a camera held at the end of arms the length of a barge pole.

Had a rather dispirited letter from Ernest Newman, saying he is ill for the first time in his life and hasn't acquired the technique to cope with it.

Sept. 25 Sent this letter to Tait and Allott:
Tuesday.

25*th September*, 1934.

DEAR TAIT AND ALLOTT,

I read *The Prickly Pear* with a combination of increasing nausea and admiration, utter sickness at your being unable to get hold of the merest vestige of plot and astonishment at the brilliance with which you have made something out of nothing. Can you not believe me when I say that Noel has utterly exhausted this idiom, and that you are just wasting your time? That is the pessimistic view.

The optimistic view is that the new play has more superficial action than the other one, which may kid some manager, though not me. Can't you realise that, despite the wit, nobody cares how your lovers pair off and that the play is about nothing else whatever? There is some talk about one man being in business and the other being a painter. But it is only talk.

What are Judith's father and mother like? Has Natalie been a typist? Is her father a cab-driver, and what does he think about cab-driving? What do all four characters think of, when they are not thinking of sleeping together? So far as I can see they are suspended in mid-air. Don't you realise that no good play will ever again be written until immorality is regarded as a departure from the normal? Your people are dull to watch just because they have no moral code. Abolish the sense of enormity and the theatre is done for!

Now to be practical. You would hardly gather from the foregoing that I am greatly attached to both of you, and on the understanding that you will respect my liking and not worry me. Lunching at Birmingham yesterday I met Henry Oscar who is hand in glove with Howard and Wyndham. I told Oscar all about *The Prickly Pear* and he at once said:

" Never mind the wit—what's the story ? " I had just read the play and I couldn't tell him, in the sense that I could have related the plot of *The Admirable Crichton* or *The Gay Lord Quex.*

Use your brains. That *you* can tell me your plot has nothing to do with it. You have lived with it. The normal playgoer is affected by what he sees of it when he is not squeezing his girl's hand or visiting the bar. All the same, the normal playgoer would know that there was a plot if he only saw ten minutes of *Tanqueray* or *Mrs. Dane's Defence.*

Oscar also said: " I suppose it's like any other play that Gertrude Lawrence has ever been in, only wittier ! " Would I send the play on that night ? He would read it the next day and discuss it with Howard and Wyndham the day after. I sent it him last night, he is reading it at the moment I am writing, and if he likes it he will show it to his people to-morrow.

So be good children. Do not ring me after four in the morning ! Get hold of the plays of Jean-Jacques Bernard who is the greatest living dramatist, counting Shaw as a mummy. When you have read him you will know what I mean about a play being an entity and presenting something apart from the words in which it is couched. *The Prickly Pear* is the reverse of the old fairy-tale about the Emperor without any clothes. It is all clothes and no Emperor.

Finally, rest assured of this, that though I object to it from every angle except its brilliance, *The Prickly Pear* has confirmed my view that you can if you want be the best light playwright in England, and within two years. Your principal rival is Priestley whose *Dangerous Corner*, *Laburnum Grove*, and *Eden End* are three totally different plays each with its own separate problem to solve. I am not concerned here with whether it is a good or a bad problem. But each is as distinct as a chess-opening. Whereas your plays are as alike as two jumps at leap-frog in the same bedroom.

Yours affectionately,

JAMES AGATE.

Josephine at His Majesty's. Flop. I am improving the technique of sleeping unobserved.

Sept. 26 *Wednesday.* The Bentley has gone phut, and so staying with George Mathew. Took Hamish Hamilton to Albert Garcia's to collect photos of Malibran and Garcia for the book. Malibran's was a drawing, of course; I suppose there were no photos in the eighteen-thirties. Albert has a magnificent picture of his great grandfather, Manuel, which is thought to be an Ingres. It is grand. The Garcia looks have cropped up again in Albert's boy, who is not in the least musical. From the original Almaviva of the *Barber* to this boy is five generations, stretching from 1757 to 1934—nearly two hundred years with which I am in some kind of touch. Was shown Viardot's sketch-book, caricatures of the artistic world of Paris in the 'fifties and 'sixties. Brilliant, delicious fun, but for which there is no market to-day. I adjudge this because Hamilton took only an amateur's and not a publisher's interest in the collection. Called for a cocktail at his flat, where I bagged for the book a magnificent photo of Forbes-Robertson, Hamish's father-in-law, as Hamlet. Then took H. to lunch with John Barrymore at the Ivy. We had melon, sole Véronique, a good mess of expensive-looking stew, and peaches with maraschino. Drank Meursault Goutte d'Or and some old brandy. Talk so good that I paid the bill without looking at it. On H. telling B. that he was formerly married to Jean Forbes-Robertson, B. said: " That must be a pretty good theatrical family to marry into. I ought to know; I've tried most of 'em ! "

My remark to B.—that he was now the age and had the looks for that accomplished ruin, the Antony of *Antony and Cleopatra*—did not go down too well. I had made him eat his lunch with the photo of F.-R. as Hamlet in front of him, and several times caught him trying to look as nobly austere.

Sept. 27 *Thursday.* *First Nights* published. Called on Dame Madge Kendal, who at last gave permission to publish her letter. She talked of her father, " who, if he had lived, would now be nearly a hundred," obviously forgetting that she herself is eighty-five. A bundle of majesty still. Some of the things she said to-day: Apropos of to-day's

players: " My dear Mr. Agate, you must not ask me to be impressed by any modern young actress. I saw Ristori! When the executioner bound Marie Antoinette's hands behind her and cut off her curls, the tears used to roll down Ristori's face as she said: ' Louis loved my curls.' To do this in full view of the public, Mr. Agate, is acting."

" Ristori was a greater actress than Sarah because she had no sex-appeal."

" I once heard Sarah recite *Les Deux Pigeons* in a drawing-room. I watched not Sarah but the audience, and whatever it was she made the pigeons say and do, the effect on the audience was improper."

" The greatest of all was Rachel, whose life I daresay you have read." (I did not point out that I had written it !) " My father used to say that Rachel hardly ever made a gesture and would recite fifty lines of Racine or Corneille without one. But that on the rare occasions when she did make a gesture it swept everybody out of the theatre."

Apropos of *Josephine*: " There is nobody living to-day who could play Napoleon except, possibly, Cedric Hardwicke. He would be able to play him in a little way."

" S—— [I have forgotten the name Dame Madge said] was an actor of the old school. When, as Virginia, I embraced him as Virginius I used to take his temples in my two hands. Once this caused his toupet to rise and leave a gap. But he covered his head with his toga, and the audience perceived nothing. At the end he used to take my hair, which was long enough for me to sit on, and wrap it round the handle of his dagger before plunging the blade into my back."

She then recited some Wordsworth, and insisted on escorting me to the door herself.

Sept. 28 *Friday.* Cochran's coming-of-age revue at the Palace was an enormous success. *Streamline* can hold its own with any one of its twenty predecessors. Harry Preston in front row with wife and daughter. Asked me in the interval to take him out and give him a drink as he felt ill. (He looked a little like dying.) Got a taxi and went to the Ivy, where I

gave him a bottle of Perrier-Jouet 1923 which bucked him up. But as he insisted on paying, it bucked me up as well. Am very fond of the little man, still the most dapper of *vieux marcheurs*. That dog which feels very, very old and still insists on being gay has my respect. (Am conscious that the man for this text is John Donne.)

After the show went to Openshaw's flat for drinks. He said my stuff was falling off, too full of French, too dependent on quotations, had too many cheap jokes and too little thought behind it, and was not worth binding in a volume. I suppose this is good for one, but at four in the morning it infuriates.

Sept. 29 *Saturday.* Spent all day over the Cochran notice. Lunched at a charming little place in Queen's Road off cold beef and a horse-radish sauce which tasted enchantingly like the smell of a leather-lined brougham of the 'nineties belonging to an old lady who never allowed anybody to smoke in it.

Sept. 30 *Sunday.* Went with George Mathew to the Sunday afternoon concert at the Palladium to hear Moiseiwitsch play the Tschaikowsky Piano Concerto and a pleasant group of pieces. Am getting tired of the Concerto, but still more of the Symphony, which I need hardly say was the Pathétique. So concentrated on programme where I read: "The second movement is founded on one of those gems of pure melody which come at rare intervals even to great composers." About as often as a line of pure poetry to a great poet, I suppose. Benno played beautifully, with the utmost of his grave, cat-like charm.

Oct. 2 *Tuesday.* Have been reading Gerhardi's *Resurrection* which ends:

> At the grave everyone cried because they loved and missed Bonzo. But I did not weep, for I had stood with him and seen the almost quizzical look with which he beheld the prostrate companion of his earthly exploits, the native guide with whom he had explored the frontiers of his destiny and had left behind him, who had always hoped he might

go with his master but who is handed back to the midget tribe who claim the custody of the truant.

Just look at the who's ! This must be the worst House-that-Jack-built sentence ever written. Gerhardi's argument is that since two-dimensional creatures would be wrong in denying the existence of a third dimension, so three-dimensional creatures are morally bound to postulate a fourth. Now unless the number of dimensions is infinite there must come a time at which this argument breaks down. Why not now, with three ?

Oct. 3 *Wednesday.* " But when we are returned to power we want to put in the Statute-book an Act which will make our people citizens of the world before they are citizens of this country."

It is not often that I bother with politics. But this statement, officially made by the deputy-leader of the Socialist party, one Major Attlee, may well be the firstling of a new order. It is at least anti-Nazi. If all nations did the same the war-nuisance would end. But they won't. It's a rum position. Somebody has to make a start; and if nobody follows, the nation making the start can only end in disaster. On the other hand if nobody makes a start . . . In my view it's all up, anyhow. Human nature is not strong or wise enough to resist the chance to destroy itself given by the chemists and the makers of aeroplanes.

Letter from Peters about a magazine's offer of twenty guineas for 2500 words connected with theatre or film or both and reasonably topical. " As you know, all magazines—indeed the whole bloody reading world—prefers personalities to profundities."

Oct. 4 *Thursday.* Correspondence *re* Tait and Allott:

Newcastle-on-Tyne,
28th September, 1934.

MY DEAR MR. AGATE,

You must realise that it is most discouraging to read the letter you sent us. You imply a successor to *The Prickly*

Pear, but we are afraid that there is no new play, and indeed small chance of there being one. You agree that the two we have written are worthy of production, but unless something definite happens before next June to one or both of them there will be no more. It is not possible to write plays with one of us separated from the other by several hundred miles.

We are tired of broadcasting that we are interested in character. Coward has never created one, and that is why it is so ridiculous for you to compare us with him. In this play the dialogue is we think intelligent, but we have endeavoured to remove evidences of mere wit at all costs. Surely the attitude of Judith towards Simon culminating in her long speech in the second act and Walter's emotional breakdown at the end of the act have nothing in common with wit or the Coward idiom or anything else but the character drawings of four people represented on the stage. Are the interviews between Walter and Natalie in the first act and the two women in the second act merely there so that we can be amusing? Is the play written purely as a *jeu d'esprit*? If you say yes to this question no wonder you find our play unsatisfactory. In all seriousness we say that character is the main concern in *The Prickly Pear* and that it should be patent to the reader. We are afraid that you are urging the old and damnable heresy that you can write amusing lines for puppets or dull ones for "characters" (like in fact dear Mr. X——) but never amusing and intelligent dialogue for real characters. It's enough to turn us to write novels to find you so wilfully perverse.

If you are trying to find reasons against the possible rejection of the new comedy may we suggest one? That it is too good. And you know as well as we do that that is the only reason for its rejection. There is only one more point. Please forget about the fag-end of a declining fashion. Our play, as we have shown, is quite unlike any of those written by Mr. Coward. Besides any artist worth his salt creates his own audience. One knows that by a glance at facts. There was no market for costume plays till one was produced. There may be no market for our play inasmuch as there is none like it running in London, but in artistic matters, at least, supply creates demand.

You will see from this letter that, provincial hicks as we are and addressing a distinguished dramatic critic, we are

not going to be put off our plain duty of writing good plays of character with a comedy interest just because the contemporary theatre is so damnably slipshod that there is no precedent for us. We may be very desperate but we have not yet reached the stage of giving the lie to our own most cherished convictions. And please believe also that we respect and admire you despite the perhaps discourteous tone of this rather embittered document.

Yours very sincerely,
KENNETH ALLOTT,
STEPHEN TAIT.

Bedford Park,
W.4
Oct. 1/34.

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

I have read the play. It is excellent entertainment, at times really brilliant. The dialogue is natural, witty, and definitely in character. There is little or no plot or situation. So that I agree with you it would require a superb quartet to sustain it through the evening, clever as it is.

I am waiting for the Howard and Wyndham people to return to town after the Marie Tempest opening to-night at Manchester. I have spoken to them about it and I am expecting them to read the script at once.

If you want it back at once, or soon, please say so and I will return it immediately.

All good wishes,
Ever sincerely,
HENRY OSCAR.

Livingstone Cottage,
Hadley Green,
Barnet, Herts.
4th October, 1934.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

I am too busy to answer bombardment with bombardment. I will therefore merely tell you in the mildest way that you are shinning up the wrong tree in your correspondence with me.

May I ask you to calm your silly little tempers and consider rationally? *You Newcastle boys may be right and we old London fogeys may be wrong.* I concede that. But

we are discussing not æsthetic right or wrong but how to get your plays put on. *And it is what the London fogeys think that is going to count!*

The film with its hurly-burly of incident and strongly marked character has knocked the bottom out of tenuous little pieces of chamber-music. I could go on for a long time but I want to be brief and constructive. I challenge you to write a play of which love or lechery—or any of their variants, e.g. jealousy—is not the principal motive. It must have a full stage of seven, eight, or ten characters, and it must not take place in one room. Nor must all the characters be on the same social level, which need only mean a butler or a burglar. And there must be a story.

Finally, (1) I shall not write again, (2) I shall read no more of your plays with four characters only, and (3) I shall not waste my influence with managers by recommending pieces which may be miracles of art but in my view have not enough plot to make them stage-worthy. (4) But I will show your play to Noel.

Yours ever,
JAMES AGATE.

Oct. 5 Stirring passage in the Journal of Alice James: *Friday.*

"The only thing which survives is the resistance we bring to life and not the strain life brings to us."

Grand words for a life-long invalid who laughed not only in the face of Death but of her own dying.

Letter from Aleister Crowley offering to show me the elements:

Waldorf Hotel,
Aldwych, W.C.2.
Oct. 4. 34.

DEAR SIR,

You rightly brush aside Gerhardi's vague experiments and half-baked metaphysics. Why not listen to those who have given a life's work to the subject? I can demonstrate controlled results in your own person; and the theory is based on the most rigid mathematical physics. (I might mention that I gave Einstein's formula for Space in 1900. The sanctuaries hold more than people suppose.)

If you have a free evening, I should be glad to show you the elements.

Yours sincerely,
ALEISTER CROWLEY.

I replied from Brighton: " Many thanks for letter and kind offer to show me the elements. But whose elements ? Vaguely I associate this with the entrails of a newly-killed goat handed on an ebony platter by a naked Nubian in a room hung with black velvet. Not that I object to Nubians, but frankly I am rather scared."

Letter from my godson, Paul Dehn:

Manchester.
5/x/34.

DEAR UNCLE JAMES,

Daddy says he's told you, but I hope he hasn't told you that I've got a Gargantuan office (in the Rabelaisian sense, because there's a lavatory next door) with two electric bells and innumerable telephones and files and wire baskets all to myself, because I wanted to tell you that part personally this is a very rambling sentence I'm sorry.

And thank you ever so much for being entirely instrumental in getting me the position.[1] It's going to be hard work but oh ! so much more fun than the last fortnight on the *Stockport Advertiser* where I learned ropes and found that most of them were nooses, but useful ones just the same. I interviewed station-masters and corpses in mill-fires and toothless widows and giant sunflowers (honestly) and spent three hours in the morning at the Police Courts and two hours of an evening in the Presses, writing copy in a garret of an office with twenty-four other reporters and only six chairs. But it was fun, and very, very interesting and it helped with the Editor a lot.

My novel proceeds apace (I learned that phrase on the *Advertiser*) and is now 30,000 words in length and about half finished. It's about a faun who comes to an English village although he doesn't really exist. That ought to make everything quite clear.

[1] The job, according to Paul's father, is that of junior reporter on the *Birmingham Daily Post*. This includes minor dramatic criticism; some book reviewing, looking after the " stiffs," i.e. keeping the obituary notices up to date, and carries a salary of £3 10*s*. 0*d*. a week.

Thank you again, and I'll try most hard not to let you down.

Remember me to Jock.

Yours affectionately,

PAUL.

I replied to Paul that, accuracy and moderation of statement being the first thing a cub reporter should learn, I was joyed at his news. Not overjoyed. . . . Also fired this tip at him: " No editor likes you to kick his behind; a kiss blown in that direction does no harm."

Oct. 7 Sunday. Again to Brighton yesterday, with George Mathew. Stayed at the Albion. View from bedroom window (Number 58) superb; view from bathroom window still better. On my asking for writing materials they sent in three kinds of new steel pens, a new quill, virgin blotter and spruce ink-well. Had the usual difficulty with Harry Preston over the champagne, but got even to some extent by buying a jorum of chocolates for his daughter. In the afternoon went on pier and watched an angling competition. So far as I observed they caught one sprat, one conger-eel, and a gull. Good sea, and what Brighton looks like in the off-season has been described by Osbert Sitwell in *After the Bombardment*. After supper at which I had too much champagne and George had too much cigar he pursued me to my room and kept me up till all hours asking how he might " win obscure fame."

Reviews of *First Nights* are coming in.

Crompton Rhodes in the *Birmingham Post* makes me blush with pleasure. " He loves to spread a jewelled fan as he struts before some French play, like a peacock on the pleasaunce of some ancient château." This is good. But better still is: " He loves to go running up trees, showing a derisive stern to highbrows, chattering like an agitated monkey."

Priestley in *The Sunday Times* writes three-quarters of a column with this fine bit:

Mr. Agate is a versatile man. He has known the cotton business (before it was a picturesque ruin), has kept a shop,

and dealt in horseflesh. He has written novels, miscellaneous essays, literary criticism. But in the sight of Heaven he is a dramatic critic. He was brought into this world, and carefully nurtured in Manchester, in order to be a dramatic critic.

The sentence " In the sight of Heaven . . ." is what I have always wanted people to say about me.

On the other hand *John o' London* is severe. I " rasp the nerves of the sensitive," my " touch jars," and my pages have " the quality of emery paper."

Oct. 30 *Tuesday.* The main events of the past three weeks have been (*a*) a flight to Australia in two and a half days by two men called Scott and Black, and (*b*) Lloyd George's denunciation of Haig in the matter of Passchendaele. This should put an end to any question of a statue. I am wrong about there being only two events of general interest. There has been a third—the death of Willy Clarkson. Willy was almost the last of the Victorian and Edwardian figures. There was never anybody like him, and London is the poorer for losing that dwarfish, lisping, fantastic, agreeable old Moll with the red curls and the dirty hands. He might have come out of a drawing by Beardsley. They got me to broadcast about him at half an hour's notice, and I wasn't very good. Told them how when Tree asked Willy what he thought of his production of *Nero*, Willy replied " Splendid ! Not a join ! " Also how Sarah always called him " *Cher maître !* " They put on the coffin the turban and jewelled stick that Willy always wore at fancy-dress parties, but no actor of any note attended the funeral.

In my little world there has been only one event—the reading of the proofs for the Autobiography. This has been a colossal job, for I suppose I made five thousand alterations, together with some lengthy insertions, deletions and substitutions. Very little relaxation but a Sunday lunch at Lady F.'s where the *least* noticeable thing in the dining-room was an eleven-foot stuffed tiger. In the private zoo this conversation took place:

J. A. Your racoons are charming. What do you feed them on?

LADY F. Grapes and peaches.

J. A. (*rudely*). Would it not be better to give your grapes and peaches to the sick poor of Watford?

LADY F. (*suavely*). Watford has a great many sick poor; I have very few racoons!

Some correspondence:

Newcastle-on-Tyne,
12th October, 1934.

MY DEAR JAMES AGATE,

We could no more let your first evasive, unreasonable, and abusive letter go unanswered than we could your charmingly generous second. We must write a play with ten characters, five changes of set, and the action must cover a period of thirteen years. And may God forgive you for it. We cannot.

Meanwhile, what with your letters and Mr. Oscar's letter we are in the utmost confusion as to where we stand. We will therefore believe that:

(a) We write masterpieces that cannot be produced.
(b) Mr. Oscar found *The Prickly Pear* excellent entertainment but was doubtful if it could be produced.
(c) Mr. Agate refuses to have anything more to do with us.
(d) Mr. Agate will do all he can for us.
(e) Mr. Coward will read our play.
(f) It will put the fear of death into him when he does so.
(g) Either or both of our plays will be done before June 1935.

Bless you and blast you, my dear Mr. Agate,

Yours sincerely,
KENNETH ALLOTT,
STEPHEN TAIT.

On Saturday a letter from me appeared in *The Manchester Guardian*. The reviewer of *First Nights* accused me of "butchering" O'Casey's *Within the Gates* to exploit my wit and also of failing to perceive that play's quality. But he cannot have it both ways. He can't accuse me of destroying a fine thing wilfully and at the same time of not realising that it

is a fine thing. So I wrote a half-column letter, which unfortunately reads a bit stilted, and the dear fellow apologises of course. Jock didn't want me to write, but I insisted. I take hell's own pains to avoid loose writing, and I don't see why others should get away with it. The rest of the notice was immensely favourable.

Henry Oscar informs me that Howard and Wyndham won't look at Tait and Allott's play. " They met the authors somewhere, and thought they were mad. Have sent the play to Auriol Lee."

Oct. 31 Letter to Tait and Allott:
Wednesday.

31*st October*, 1934.

DEAR TAIT AND ALLOTT,

I have received a discouraging letter from Henry Oscar who says that he cannot get Howard and Wyndham to interest themselves in *The Prickly Pear*.

Auriol Lee now writes, saying: " I don't know what to do. I am crazy about the *writing* of *The Prickly Pear*, and I am not an agent any more. Can't do anything active myself, but *can* say what I think. I am staying at Muriel Pratt's (she is *chez* Pinker's dramatic dept.) and am leaving her the play. I know it's a tough proposition as it's *sincere* and tragic in its lay-out. Simon and Judith are not *comedy*—though they are written in high-comedy vein—the story is a bitter one really. But I would give a lot to see it done. If Muriel likes it she should try a Sunday night with a fine cast—but I am afraid most people will be against us. There is a foul word ' commercial ' they use. . . . I have a packed programme myself—but I don't mind saying how deeply impressed I am with these authors."

Thus, as Shakespeare says, one woe doth tread upon another's heels. But that old codger was always ready with an antidote, and I need not remind you that he also has this passage:—" Fortune knows, We scorn her most when most she offers blows."

I have a serious enquiry for the play from the man who is doing all the good new things at the Westminster Theatre, including *King Lear*. This is because I spoke to him of your play a fortnight ago with my usual ecstasy. I am, as 'twere, a Tree of Hope and, I have no doubt you think,

something blasted ! Still—Hang there like fruit, my souls, till the tree die, as Posthumus says to Imogen.

You cannot realise, of course, that no unlicked cubs have ever been so blatantly pushed. And why I do it I don't know. But I repeat, obviously *ad nauseam*, it is no use knocking at even super-right doors with the wrong stuff.

Yours ever,
JAMES AGATE.

Nov. 2 *Friday.* News to hand that Laughton has retired from the rôle of Micawber in the film of *David Copperfield* in which Hugh Walpole is to play a clergyman. Does not Hugh see that to bring a well-known character from real life into an imaginary sequence of events is to destroy the reality of that imaginary sequence ? It is no use Hugh modestly pleading that he is unknown. His features have been made public over and over again in connection with this Hospital and that Benevolent Institution. They are as well known as St. Paul's Cathedral and better known than its Dean. People on beholding Hugh's features in this film will not be able to help nudging and whispering to their neighbours, or simply saying to themselves: " Look, that's Hugh Walpole, the author of that nice long book about Susan Saddleback ! " If they are Americans they will say to each other: " Gee ! Didn't he lecture last fall at Utah ? Do you remember, dear, how nice he was about the younger novelists ? " By which time, of course, the thread of the film-narrative will be thoroughly broken. If Hugh must play I would sooner have seen him as Micawber, since the shock of him appearing at all would be got over early on, after which we could go back to uninterrupted Dickens. Besides, where is it to end ? Why not Priestley for Traddles, Beverley Nichols for Steerforth, Virginia Woolf for Mrs. Gummidge, Rose Macaulay for Rosa Dartle, Ursula Bloom for Dora, Vera Brittain for Agnes, Dorothy Sayers for Miss Murdstone, Clemence Dane for Betsey Trotwood, G. B. Stern for Miss Mowcher, Ethel Mannin for Little Em'ly, and me for Mr. Dick ?

A remarkable letter which I must give exactly as written:

This is after reading your review of Mr. N. Cardus' book *Good Days*. I came to M/C from Malta in 1900 and have never recovered from the experience. What prompts me to write to you is the mention of Mr. A. C. MacLaren's name and the phrase " The noblest Roman of them all." Know you, that tho' I saw that *man* on the field at Old Trafford, only a few times, and leaving M/C 22 yrs ago, I think of him continually, his name and figure are always before me, and the above description is mine also. Of all the county Captins of that time and gorblimey, they were real Captins in those days he was it —" IT." A Gent in a Jungle. I believe that he is not so well these days. What a pity. I'll gamble that there are millions who honour and remember him for his English style, which went with him. We hear still about " Englishmen." He is the only one that I can remember.

I was at the L and Y Match when Jas Hallows crocked up. I can see in my mind yet the disturbance on the Balcony. The white figures jazzing about so agitatedly and guessed of trouble, or more. I saw Cotter's first Test Match at O.T. How we waited for him, and his first, I can still film it, ¼mile run from Stretford end. Ball over J J. Kelly's nut and Bump on the sight board, 4. I can remember Bored Hawke, too bloody lazy to pick a ball up from a Lancastrian's hit; leaving that dirty job to one of his subordinates. A Cricket Curzon this one. I worked, as a boy at the Midland Hotel M/C, and saw the Australians, a close-up, believe me. I saw the scowling McLeod, the Handsome V. Trumper, a real good looking lad this. Trumble, Clem Hill and had a dam good nose around their bags, which stood outside their rooms.

I got into trouble over this, making an excuse to be there. I made engineering noises around the corridors while spotting out the Cricketers' bags. I must have overdone this, one morning, too much, because a lady, in what I know now as a dressing gown, dashed out of a door in a royal rage. My age alone saved me. I " woke her up " she said. Seeing that she was a great Gaiety star, it wants thinking about, does it not ?

The only thing in M/C to my mind then worth anything was the M/C Cathedral Choir. I have been to most other

English Cathedrals, but never a choir like this. I can film them, coming up from the front somewhere, rolling round the chancel side to their places. Being a regular, I sat parrell to the Decans. I took my girl *once* to hear them a year or two after. Oh ! The dashing Tenors and Bass and the perky boys, damme they made me blush. Their singing was impudent without being brazen and it was the best that I have ever heard. The way they used to speed thro' the Litany so daintily was worth quids. Their swift, smooth velvet staccato " Spare us, good Lord," is still in my ears. Every word, every syllable, every " S " the solitary comma, the two " D's " and the prayer were all there. In four words *never was* so much.

When I had money I was found at Old Trafford. When I had none I went to the Cathedral.

Maybe if I had been older I could have found something else good. But I think that there was nothing else as good.

Nov. 5 Monday. One more orgy of proof-correcting and final sitting to James Gunn. Towards the end of the week I got in touch with Muriel Pratt and made all right with her about *The Prickly Pear*. In the meantime these have arrived from T. and A. First a wire saying " Okay, chief, bless you." Followed by:

Newcastle-on-Tyne.
Black Saturday. 3/11/34

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

Now about the Arts Theatre. We are of course very pleased, although it is not everything we had hoped for. We viewed the " cutting and fixing " by Miss Pratt with some trepidation until that dear lady wrote this morning saying she would be shortly sending us a long letter about it. Although we distrust all interference even with the best intentions and imagine anything from a bedroom farce to a blank-verse tragedy as the result of cutting and " fixing " we promise we shall be very grateful, resigned and helpful.

Miss Auriol Lee (whom God preserve !) is obviously extremely intelligent; which is surprising considering the number of bad plays she has been invited to produce.

Yours sincerely,
STEPHEN TAIT,
K. ALLOTT.

My day:

10.30 Sat for James Gunn.
1.0 Film lunch at Claridges.
2.30 Appointment at Hamish Hamilton's.
3.16 René Clair's new film at Academy Cinema.
6.0 Ernest Fenton's. Reviewed six books for *D.E.* article, 1600 words. E. told me this pathetic story. One evening shortly before the war he and Arthur Roberts were walking down Panton Street where, outside a public house, an old man was mournfully playing on a penny whistle the old waltz "Love's Golden Dream is Past." It was five minutes to closing time, and as they passed the old man, Arthur said, "Hurry up, hurry up, or you'll be too late to have one!" The old man replied, "Sorry, Mr. Roberts, but I can't hurry up. You see it's marked *Adagio*."
10.0 Lay down for a snooze.
11.30 Got up, dressed and went to Peter Page's masked supper given in conjunction with some Russian Princess. Wouldn't have gone only don't want to appear to slight Peter.
3.30 Bed.

Nov. 25 Sunday. A dreadful three weeks of correcting proofs, which have now got into page. As the lawyers object to certain passages these have to be deleted and something else written in. Here's one of my days:

11.30 Interview with lawyer *re* possible libels.
12.0 Speech at *Sunday Times* Book Exhibition.
3.0 Lawyer's again. Violent toothache.
5.0 Journey in fog to Larkhill Rise, Clapham, to have tooth extracted. Have a big job to find the place, and a bigger job when I get there. Why Larkhill Rise? Because my lawyer knew a man there who was free and could see me.
6.30 Write an article at Fenton's.
8.0 Gielgud's Hamlet.

The fat is in the fire *re* my views on John's omission of everything in the character except the pretty bits. Jessica

Tandy, who played Ophelia, looked like Mrs. Constant Lambert and spoke like Elsa Lanchester. Bergel gave her immense praise because she "looked like some pathetic Velazquez infanta." Jock tells me of a battle royal at Monty's, the contending parties being highbrows who have not seen John's Hamlet and abuse my article, and highbrows who have seen it and defend my article without having read it.

The next night Monty took me to Sadler's Wells to see, or hear, the *Nozze di Figaro*. "Music that gentlier on the spirit lies"? It lay so gently on mine that I slept all the way through. I hope I can plead that I was tired out. Monty has got a new picture representing, if that is the word, a desert, a poached-egg, and a bottle-nosed, bright-blue whale swimming about in a tank. M. says it keeps him abreast of the *surréaliste* movement.

On another evening I supped at the Savoy Grill with Rayner and Driberg of the *Express*, and a most amusing cove who does their cookery articles. He seemed asleep most of the time, but hearing Galsworthy mentioned opened his eyes to say: "A dreary dog!" and at once fell asleep again. Exactly like a character in *Alice*. This reminds me of an old story about Mostyn Pigott. Roused from his after-lunch nap to give his opinion of Columbus, Mostyn said "A damned interfering snoot!" and went to sleep again.

Pinero died on Friday, and I suppose few people more thoroughly outlived their day. I think his essential achievement has never been grasped, which is that he made the intellectual theatre possible in this country. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is sham-Ibsen and sham-intellectualism, and any schoolboy of to-day could riddle its psychology. Most of them, when they get to Oxford, do. But the play was the nearest to the genuine article the English public would stand, and Pinero did it, not in some hole-and-corner Sunday society, but in the full blaze of St. James's, theatre and parish. After that, everything became possible. Seen in perspective Pinero is one of the really great men of the English theatre. Indeed I should put this play among the few unmissable milestones of the last hundred years. In my view these are: *Caste*, *The*

Second Mrs. Tanqueray, *Widowers' Houses*, *The Silver Box*, and *Musical Chairs*. Each of these inaugurates something new that was not feasible before. P.'s technique was always masterly and his plays had that initial quality of excitement *in the theatre* which the normal playgoer will always look for before every other quality. After the war he ceased to count, and perhaps a little before. But he had done enough. The Sunday papers are mingy about him. The *S.T.* asked me for a short paragraph which I declined, saying it must be a full-dress article or nothing. So it was nothing. It is odd that one never saw P. at a first night. On the day after P. died G. B. S. had a heart-attack. The old man has been over-doing it, but the news is that the attack is not serious. The newspapers are going to hate it if anything of importance turns up this week besides the royal wedding. They will sell all they can print anyhow, and so G. B. S. would be a wasted scoop !

Have begun the week with a row:

I wrote about *Sweet Aloes* this sentence: " Like some silly brook this play will run for ever." *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* all quote the *S.T.* in their advertisement columns as saying " This play will run for ever," while on the walls of the theatre, Wyndham's, the mutilated sentence is followed by my name in full as well as the paper's. Have instructed Curt Dehn, my lawyer, to send a letter to all the offending parties.

In *The Times* yesterday this appeared:

> The death occurred at her residence near Wimborne (Dorset) on Thursday, at the age of 96, of Mrs. Style, widow of a former headmaster of Giggleswick who subsequently became rector of the little Dorsetshire parish of Chalbury, near Wimborne.

The old lady seemed very nearly that age when I knew her forty-three years ago, in 1891, when I first went to Giggleswick. I do not remember her speaking to me, though perhaps I once went shyly to tea in the headmaster's drawing-room. I remember that she was tiny and red-faced and had the air of a semi-invalid, and of course I had no difficulty in believing all that the other boys told me, how she drank like a fish and was

really a dangerous lunatic who would have been shut up if old Boots, her husband, had not gone surety for her. I now think "Ma Boots" was a chronic dyspeptic who never took anything stronger than the weakest tea. As for Booter himself—or more properly the Rev. George Style, M.A.—it shocks me to see so little made of him. He struck fear into us all by a kind of remote cruelty. There was even something of Henry Irving about him, and his algebra papers were inhumanly testing. I heard him preach in chapel after one of the boys had died and even that did not seem to melt him. His voice was pitiless, and I used to think it odd that one with whom intercession was impossible should intercede with God. He had an austere, shrivelled face with a grey moustache and a tuft under the chin which worked up and down with his Adam's apple in a horribly fascinating way. To little boys he was Satanic and terrifying. When I went back as an old boy I found him much softer than I could have thought, but even then he was not quite human. Now I suppose he is utterly forgotten, except that he is one of the figures in the big window of the School Chapel built a few years after I left. Oh, that that earth, which held a little world in awe, should now be relegated to the status of "a former headmaster"!

Nov. 26 *Monday.* Livingstone Cottage broken into during the week-end, everybody being away. Nothing taken, but all drawers and cupboards ransacked and contents strewn about the house. Also hundreds of burned matches. They left things like dress-studs and waistcoat buttons untouched. The police think they were looking for cash and were not interested in anything else. Have decided to get an Airedale. Lunched with Driberg of the *D.E.* and told him only thing taken by burglars was a monograph on the less venerable aspects of Bede!

Nov. 27 *Tuesday.* Open *D.E.* and find burglars are supposed to have taken a "study of the drama of Sheridan Knowles," on which I am supposed to have been at work for twenty-three years! Driberg subsequently

explained that it is getting near Christmas and he was afraid *D. E.* readers would be offended by a joke about Bede !

Nov. 28 *Wednesday.* Awful time with the Autobiography, which has now gone to a second lawyer with a view to possible libel actions. I have now read it five times—when it came back from the typist, in galley, in page, after the first lawyer had hacked it about, and now that the second fellow has made his suggestions. Have done an immense amount of re-writing, and the bill for author's corrections was £65 over a month ago. What it is now I dare not think. Stephen Haggard came to lunch. He is the most modest, disarming fellow imaginable. All the papers offending in the matter of the misquotation in their advertisements, and also the management concerned, have apologised and withdrawn. A small victory, but a good cause to be victor in. Airedale arrived from kennels in Surrey. Name of Roger.

Nov. 29 *Thursday.* Prince George married to Princess Marina. The detective who called on me to-day *re* the burglary told me that the credentials of every seat-holder had been rigorously examined, and that anybody taking a house or flat along the route within the last two or three weeks had been made to clear out by the police during yesterday and to-day, and stay out ! Over 100,000 detectives and plain-clothes men in the crowd. Decorations very tawdry, and newspapers unreadable throughout the week.

Nov. 30 *Friday.* The Index to the book arrived. Look at once to see if my editor's name is spelled correctly and can't find it ! Look for Lord Camrose. Not there either ! No Forbes-Robertson ! Begin to examine Index seriously and turn it over to Jock who reports that scores of important names have been omitted. And this is professional indexing ! Yet the fellow, without meaning to be funny, includes such items as

Cutler, Kate, and cremation
Dates, Seven thousand tons of liquefying
Wesley, Ghost of
Whipsnade, Accident at

I shall decline to pay seven guineas for work which Jock has to do all over again.

Letter from Tait and Allott, giving plot of new play. It sounds thin, but at least has seven characters and they've got away from their old stuff at last. The title—*The Twisted Smile*—is excellent. These boys are very good at names. My interest in them does not lessen.

Roger not too satisfactory. Spent most of last night wuff-wuffing outside my bedroom-door. Disquieting. Shows signs of liking tramps and disliking inmates of Livingstone Cottage.

Dec. 1 *Saturday.* It is raining Airedales. My friend Leaver has just 'phoned to say he is giving me one, and will I collect it on Monday?

Dec. 2 *Sunday.* Good boxing at the Ring last night. They have instituted a loud-speaker which plays in the interval. While this was going on a yellow-haired tot not more than five years old stepped out into one of the gangways and with complete lack of self-consciousness began to dance. He kept it up for ten minutes and finally a spectator went round with a hat and collected twelve or fifteen shillingsworth of coppers, only to find that the kid had no pockets to put them in. So they sent him home with two bigger boys who, I suspect, robbed him.

Dec. 3 *Monday.* Staff—consisting at the moment of Caddick, servant, and Arthur Wright, chauffeur—instructed to return Roger to original kennels. Staff complains that motion of car made Roger sick all over staff. Retort that there was nothing to prevent staff from being sick all over Roger. Collect Bruce, an enormous and fierce hound, from Leaver at 1 in the morning. Motor home with Bruce in back of car. Air of general politeness all round. Bruce is a trained dog and won't touch anything, even if held to his nose, until you say "Yes." If you say "No" he gives it back into your hand. But he is "temperamental," dislikes uniform and has already slain 1 Chow and 2 Alsatians. Leaving his last owner through dragging a nursemaid, perambulator and baby into the Round Pond. Fond of children.

Dec. 4 *Tuesday.* Bruce has entirely knuckled under to Cinders, my black spaniel bitch. She is mistress of the kitchen now as before, and has made this clear to Bruce who in the course of demonstration has lost several pawfuls of hair.

Dec. 5 *Wednesday.* At the club last night Douglas Furber said of a still-life—melon, grapes, and some tired figs: "Even the Committee hate it. But they can't take it down as it has old Odell's death-certificate pasted on the back!"

A letter from S. P. B. Mais this morning asking me to speak at a cricket dinner of Sussex yokels—"market gardeners, chauffeurs, builders, undertakers." Why not gallows-makers, and so complete the echo from *Hamlet*? Accept if no first night. Nerves must be getting better or I should fight shy of such company. By the way Dickens must have had these morbid neuroses—or known all about them. Yesterday in *David Copperfield* I found this, in reference to the approaching end of Barkis. It is Steerforth speaking. "It's a bad job. But the sun sets every day, and people die every minute, and we mustn't be scared by the common lot. If we failed to hold our own because that equal foot at all men's doors was heard knocking somewhere, every object in this world would slip from us. No! Ride on!" etc., etc.

Just as I was writing the last sentence George Bishop telephoned to say that Lord Riddell died this morning.

Dec. 6 *Thursday.* *The Times* offended again. Of a little Chinese play called *Lady Precious Stream*, I wrote in the *S.T.*:

> Just as in Mr. Beerbohm's parody, George Moore had to read but one chapter of *Pickwick* to know the whole sublimity of Dickens, so one has but to cock an eye at this little Chinese fantasy to recognise that respect in which it towers over everything else on the London stage at the moment. *It doesn't need any scenery.*

In its advertisement columns *The Times* had "... towers over everything else on the London stage—James Agate in *Sunday Times*." I put Dehn on to them, but they did not

withdraw the thing for four days. Neither would they print Dehn's letter. And, of course, no apology. Vernon Woodhouse told me of a case he had against a daily newspaper when they said, " We shall fight to the death. But if you care to come round to see our Mr. Jones at five-thirty . . ."

Letter from Paul:

Edgbaston,
Birmingham.
5./xii./34.

DEAR UNCLE JAMES,

I've been saving up for a long, cumulative letter, so that when the time came, I could pour out my weal or woe as the case might be. At the moment, all's weal, but I want your advice. I joined the *Post* originally as temporary substitute for one Hancock, assistant editor, who was suffering at the time from a nervous breakdown occasioned by the wear and tear of the job I'm doing now ! Nominally, he is to return at the end of the first week in January, when, according to the bond, I am to go. With this in view, I have kept in touch with big strings and little strings on the *Express* and *Standard*, all of whom have informed me that my provincial experience will stand me in good stead, and that they, personally, will see to it that I have no difficulty in getting a job in Fleet Street. But, awkwardly enough, I have Made Good. One of the assistant editors told me last week (unofficially and therefore very *entre nous*) that Record is pleased: that, if Hancock doesn't come back, I shall probably be asked to carry on as hitherto; and that, even if he does return, I shall still be asked to stay in some other capacity. Problem: If the Beaverbrook position materialises, shall I stay in Birmingham notwithstanding, or go to London ? I'm certain that this is a question which demands the mature judgement of a more experienced mind than mine, but in a spirit of reprehensible autoanalysis I've tabulated pro's and con's from a personal point of view:

Pro London

(a) Nauseating ambition.
(b) The question of pay. Here, I'm getting £3 10*s.* 0*d.* per week with no outside help or parental allowance. I've saved £9 in two months, but I *do* like a little bit of butter to my bread.

(c) Journalist's Mecca. If I have the opportunity of getting into Fleet Street early on in life, oughtn't I to take it ?
(d) Increased prospects, from every point of view.
(e) I want to be a dramatic critic, and R. Crompton Rhodes is a fixture.

Pro Birmingham

(a) I want to be a dramatic critic, and reference to Who's Who tells me that all the best dramatic critics spent *at least* six years in the provinces.
(b) The hideous uncertainty of life on a London paper, and the likelihood of settled tranquillity here in Birmingham, though God knows I detest the place. (But see London—a.)
(c) The involuntary but deep-rooted conviction that I'm improving under Record's tuition, and that another little year wouldn't do me any harm. (But see London—a.)

Meanwhile, I'm very happy and enjoying the work here ever so much, for which I thank you again, and I hope you don't mind my hating the city as a city because I can't help it and it's chiefly due to my landlady who's very repressed and consequently tries to mother me. I got used to the night-work very quickly, and after about a week's fearful heart-searching when all my efforts were hacked and cut and revised by Record's unerring hand, I assimilated the true third-leader style, cast off all my Oxonian ebullience and began to feel I was the most indispensable man on the staff. And now I write airy and frivolous subleaders every night and occasionally serious ones on things like Beacons and Nazis and Mussolini and *Alice in Wonderland*, and heaps of book-reviews, being the poor fool who has to make up a whole column of Children's Informative Literature for the Christmas Columns (you know . . . " Twenty-one Ways to Make an Aeroplane," " The Pageant of Chinese History," " Zong, the Gipsy Pony " and " The Romance of Engineering "), and every now and then I do a " special " for the Books and Writers column which I'm allowed to initial and get paid extra. Also I look through the proofs of the paper each evening in an abortive search for matter libellous, in bad taste, bad grammar or bad style, and I file masses and masses of obituaries for people

who haven't died yet but are bound to one day. I did yours last Wednesday.

In my spare time, I work sporadically at my novel and broadcast twice a week in the Children's Hour from Midland Regional, which adds about a guinea to my weekly wage. And I think that's all, except that my first fox-trot has just been published with my name in Lombard-Gothic capitals on the front and an ee-normous picture of Fay Compton in the bottom right-hand corner. It's the theme-song in her new film, and quite bloody.

Will you, perhaps, write and advise me about London? Remember me to Jock, and very gratefully

I remain,

Your affectionate,

PAUL.

I replied telling Paul to take the London job if it's concrete and not merely based on vague benevolences.

Have decided upon a six months' campaign of retrenchment. This means giving up Barnet and retiring to some hole in Bloomsbury. Shall put down car and give Jock and Caddick a long holiday, with leave to find other jobs if they can. Drastic, but if I don't do it the Official Receiver will. This means giving up the car, cutting out champagne, and cigars down to a minimum. Shall consider it war-time again. Well, there *is* a war on, and it is being waged round me. The difficulty will be writing the stuff out by hand. I can foresee a horrid time, but there it is! If the book turns up trumps then all is well. *But it won't.* There will be a sensational start which will fizzle out in about a week. During that week I shall be thinking we've got another *Good Companions*, and this is the will-o'-the-wisp which I must avoid. Jock says I can't carry out what I'm proposing—that I haven't the stamina. I take this to be the polite word for guts. Well, we'll see. I shall miss him in lots of ways.

Dec. 8 *Saturday.* Took ground floor flat at 14 Doughty Street, almost opposite 55, where I spent many happy years, and was always fascinated by the plaque on my new front which reads:

SYDNEY SMITH
1771–1845
AUTHOR AND WIT
LIVED HERE

Dec. 15 *Saturday.* A week of frantic removal and " chassis " and double shifts owing to all the papers wanting their stuff early on account of Christmas. A certain amount of alleviation, however:

(1) A very good party at the Masseys'. Marie Tempest and Willie Browne, Maurice Ingram, Freddie Lonsdale and an actress whose name I didn't catch. Adrianne talked very well all evening and Lonsdale listened superbly. Ray sat like a skeleton at his own feast. Maurice is going to Rome, and Adrianne presented him with a protective woolly. " A *ceinture de chasteté?* " somebody asked, and Maurice riposted " No. A passport to immaculate conception ! "

(2) Jock's interruption when I was enthusing about Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimations of Immortality: " The poetry's O.K. But it's bum philosophy ! "

(3) The Book Society has made the Autobiography its non-fiction choice for February.

Dec. 16 *Sunday* From an article by Thomas Burke in to-day's *Referee*:

> The Cockney gamin actually does not talk in words. He talks in sounds. He does not say " Wot erbaht goin' aht fer ther dye," or anything so clipped and definite as that. He slurs it to " Wodda buht go nuht f' th' daey."
>
> Here is a genuine eclogue, overheard on a 'bus, between Putney and Fulham:
>
> " Lo, Bert. Wodger do Saddy ? " " Din do nuthen. Wodjoo do ? " " Bidda gardnin. Wenna pigchers."
>
> " Wodgersee ? " " O, silly muck . . . Owzerni ? " " Ernizallright. Gottarise."
>
> " Gottarise. A ? Cor ! Nomenny rises buht now." " Nohw. Biddaluck frim. Ecun do withit." " Beteecan. Well, seeya seevening."

What Burke doesn't realise is that this ultra-phonetic spelling, though fascinatingly real, is unreadable except in

Alan Dent
"Jock"

minute doses. To read a lot of it would be like shaking hands with a man's finger-prints.

Dec. 18 *Tuesday.* Revival at the Alhambra of *The Bing Boys* with George Robey and Violet Loraine. Audience very much moved during singing of "If You were the only Girl in the World."

Last, final proofs of the book went to the printers to-day. It is now too late to change a comma, and even the title *Ego* must remain for good or ill. I have done all I can. Months of blood and sweat and making myself a bore and a nuisance to everybody. Cover by Gunn, Book Society recommendation, good blurb by Meg Bishop—more is not humanly possible. The rest is on the knees of the public. I am resolutely not hoping, and am making my new budget on the basis of getting nothing more than I have already drawn, i.e. £200 less £20 Peters' commission, Charles the extra secretary's salary and expenses at Whitby which I put down at £70, a further £15 for my share in the illustrations, £8 for typewriting and £7 for indexing. This leaves me with a net profit of £80, from which has still to be deducted various lunches and jollifications. If I make £50 in all I shall consider myself lucky.

Dec. 19 *Wednesday.* Doughty Street is beginning to feel like home. Have cleared Barnet of everything I mean to take, and returned Bruce, the Airedale. My landlady has taken a fancy to Cinders, my spaniel bitch, who now lives on permanent loan to the old girl, Scotch and very agreeable. She lives in the flat immediately above mine, and Cinders can visit me whenever she wants.

Dec. 20 *Thursday.* Very busy day. This morning wrote two articles of 1750 words each. Too busy to attend Mills's circus lunch and snatched a bite at the Kensington Palace Hotel. Then on to the circus, which I thought better than ever and put together with greater eye to beauty, though this is probably accidental. Three outstanding things. A trio of flying trapeze artists, the best I ever saw. Sixteen

horses lit up with electric fairy lamps and waltzing in pairs out of the darkened ring to the strains of " Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald." A troupe of Chinese acrobats and jugglers. For a long time one of the young men did nothing, but drew all eyes to him by the mingled superbity and charm of his appearance and his acceptance of supremacy in his art. When, finally, he took the floor he gave a display of virtuosity and elegance the like of which I have never seen. These acrobats have brains in their hands, feet, loins, thighs. After all, why should we relegate genius to the head only? Why may not a human body possess it *in the body's right*, from the toes to the nape of the neck? It doesn't need to go any higher. I would give any fame I may have or acquire just to be this Chinese acrobat, who, like a show harness horse, is fulfilling some useful function in the world. Unlike me, who spend my time sending people to plays they won't like and keeping them from others they would like.

Dec. 21 *Friday.* My father was born one hundred years ago to-day. Gave a little party last night—the first meal in the new flat—to May, Edward, Wilfrid Grantham, who is May's husband, and Lizzie, who has been with us fifty-four years. At five minutes past twelve there was a little ceremony, and a toast was drunk. Gustave 'phoned from Manchester at the exact minute, and Harry had got through from Wakefield a quarter of an hour earlier. It is just like Harry to take care not to get in the way of Gustave's call. Edward, who is a mine of the unmarketable, pulled out of his pocket a sheet of foolscap containing some quotations from Landor, whom he is ploughing through, and with the idea that I might be able to use them. I liked:

" If we critics are logical, it is the most that can be required at our hands: we should go out of our record if we were philosophical."

" If I found in the world five equal to myself, I would walk out of it, not to be jostled."

" If we could find a man exempt by nature from vices and infirmities, we should find one not worth knowing."

"There are folks who, when they read my criticism, say, 'I do not think so.' It is because they do not think so, that I write."

"I have observed the same man extol in private the very book on whose ruin he dined the day before."

"Quickness is among the least of the mind's properties. The mad often retain it: the liar has it, the cheat has it: we find it on the race-course and at the card-table: education does not give it, and reflection takes away from it."

Nevertheless I am glad I have sufficient quickness of perception to realise this morning that owing to the alignment of this flat unless I shut the door of either my sitting-room or bedroom I am visible in the bathroom to the people on the other side of the street. Arnold Bennett would have been quick to notice this.

Dec. 22 *Saturday.* Jock and Arthur, who is still my chauffeur, spent yesterday clearing up at Barnet. They got caught in a fog and were held up by hundreds of cars with the result that I did not begin my *S.T.* article until midnight after a Soho-bought supper of foie gras, cold chicken, olives, cheese and a bottle of Barbera Amabile which Jock insisted on calling Barbera Abominabile, which was very rude to my outlay on it of two shillings and ninepence. Dictated till three o'clock and used up the first of Edward's Landor quotations.

The post last night brought me a copy of *Eden End*, inscribed by Priestley. The publisher, Heinemann, has put a band round the book. On it is written:

> "... This beautiful play ... moved and amused me as I like to be moved and amused in the theatre."
>
> JAMES AGATE in *The Sunday Times*.

I am immensely gratified, as I ought to be.

To-day I took out to lunch Fred Leigh, a great help in putting the new flat to rights. Fred, who with his height, tummy and yellow hair looks like a German tenor's Siegfried, has been many things—currier, railway-painter, actor, singer, boxer, and

the youngest publican that ever held a licence in the Midlands. As a young man he painted the girders at New Street station, Birmingham, and was sacked for falling asleep on a plank in the roof a foot wide! Among his feats of strength were to press a 150-pound dumb-bell six times from the left shoulder, to lie on the floor and raise 5 cwt. of sand to the standing position, to carry six jars of whisky containing four gallons each up two flights of stairs (one under each arm and two in each hand), to throw an eighteen-gallon cask of beer from between his legs over his head in one lift, and to lift two sacks of flour weighing 2 cwt. each off two grocery counters and walk off with them. During the war when in France with the R.G.A. he used to carry 6 hundred-pound shells, 3 in each arm, down the duck-boards to the gun. In November 1917, when strafing Fritz at Metz, in one morning he lifted two thousand hundred-pound shells on to ten men's backs, to put beside a 4-gun battery. Only four hundred were fired and then the battery pulled out and retired thirty-five kilometres to Beaumetz. The 51st Division took ten thousand prisoners, but Fred would rather have fired off the balance of the shells.

Jock tells me that his lunch to-day, self-consolatory after a row with me, consisted of a glass of sherry, a dozen oysters, a plate of calf's head, a pint of draught cider, a helping of Christmas pudding and three double Irish whiskeys. He was sober after it.

Dec. 23 *Sunday.* *The Sunday Times* had a magnificent scoop to-day. This was a letter written to his mother by a lieutenant in the 20th Foot who mounted guard over the dead body of Napoleon at St. Helena. It is one of the most vivid pieces of writing I have ever read, and reeks of mortality. On the third day after death the countenance " was serene and placid, it had of course fallen in, his features were handsome and bold, his hand very delicate and small and a beautiful colour." Eleven days later the countenance had fallen in a little more. " I took up his hand and held it for some time, examining the fingers and his features—that hand which Kings had kissed and which had caused so many

to tremble." (" A hand that kings have lipped, and trembled kissing," says Shakespeare's Cleopatra.) The lieutenant stands at the foot of the bed while the guard files past. " The men's countenances were capital, as they looked at the Body they were indescribable at least by letter, the smell at this time began to be rather strong and I was glad to go away as soon as the men were gone." Later he writes, " You can have no idea of how lonely I feel on guard to-night ! I know not how it is, but it is so. I have just posted the last sentries I suppose I shall ever put round his Body. I cannot drive his countenance from my mind's eye, it haunts me continually, and the smell is still in my nose and on my hands." There are one or two admirable touches—the difficulty about making the death mask in the absence of plaster of Paris necessitating the use of Roman cement, the depreciation in the value of horses and hutments, and the picture of Napoléon lying all togged up on his famous iron bedstead on which his military cloak had been spread.

Went in the evening to the film called *No Greater Glory*. This parallel of the world war and two rival gangs of kids moved me to tears, owing, I think, to the remarkable acting of the leading performer, who cannot be more than fourteen.

Dec. 24 *Monday.* Christmas Eve. Usual pantomime at the Lyceum. Arrived at theatre about 3.15 and owing to the ballet and transformation scene heard no word spoken till 4.30 or so. Had a good sleep. Poor show except for George Jackley and Naughton and Gold. Drury Lane not much better. As a mark of respect to Julian Wylie they left his box empty. Phyllis Neilson-Terry nothing like a principal boy. This aloof, majestic creature who never warms up, singing sentimental songs in the grand opera manner albeit in a tiny voice, never gets on terms with the audience. What one wants from a principal boy is not cascades of trills and roulades but the suggestion that she will presently sup off tripe and onions. If one of this family must play principal boys it should be Julia.

Supper at Savoy Grill with Monty and Maurice Ingram.

Heated debate as to whether artists should have an interest in their pictures after they have sold them. Utrillo, starving, sells a picture for one hundred francs. Twenty years later Monty buys it for five hundred pounds. Should U. get part of this increment? Monty raises the usual legal difficulties and quibbles, which are the reason why nothing ever gets reformed.

Dec. 25 *Tuesday.* Christmas Day. My presents—two hyacinths (Ernest Fenton) and six handkerchiefs (George Mathew). Lunched at Ernest's. Leo said wireless had added a new pleasure to existence—that of turning it off! Worked all day and dined at Monty's in the evening. Won 12/6 at poker. John Deverell was talking when I arrived at 8.15 and was still talking when I left at 2 o'clock. And good talk, too.

Letter from Tait and Allott asking me to return a copy of *The Prickly Pear* "*quam celerrime*," which the young beggars impudently translate for me.

In the evening played billiards in a saloon at Charing Cross. Had a card from Jock, who is on holiday, enquiring whether a pot of caviare he received on Christmas Day came from me. His father said: "Is not that the stuff Hamlet applied to the general?"

1935

Jan. 1 *Tuesday.* The house at Barnet is now swept and garnished in readiness for the next tenant, and the flat in Kensington Gardens Square is still let. Since I came to London in 1920 I have lived in Kensington Gardens Square, Warwick Street in Victoria, Hogarth Road, Portsdown Road, Ladbroke Gardens, West Street opposite the Ivy, Doughty Street, Palace Court, again Kensington Gardens Square, and again Doughty Street, with country cottages at Beaconsfield, Westcliff and Barnet, and a long stay at the Palace Hotel, Southend.

Jan. 2 *Wednesday.* Horror of horrors ! Discovered on p. 327 of *Ego* that I allude to " Johnson's *Boswell.*" The copies have gone to the binder and we shall have to re-page. Yet Jock and I read the proof a dozen times. It *looks* right if you're reading quickly. I once, in a broadcast talk, alluded to *The Wimpoles of Barrett Street,* and Eiluned Lewis's *Dew on the Grass* ran through eight editions here and in America with a reference to the *Twelve* Commandments. Even Max, in the proof of one of his letters in *Ego* passed " G. H. Lewis." Fortunately I spotted this and it appears correctly as " G. H. Lewes."

Jan. 3 *Thursday.* Supper at Café Royal with George Mathew. Talked *my* shop till two in the morning. Afterwards George and I strolled about the streets endlessly talking *his* shop. George thinks he ought to be editing *The Times* or *Punch.* Preferably *Punch*; he has the obsession of wit and is crazy to write one witty book before he dies. He doesn't want fame or money for it, but is concerned by the passion for wit as the thing in itself. Has written novels for their witty passages, plays for the chance given by the dialogue, and scores of essays. This obsession is making

George miserable, and I tell him he should, if and since life holds nothing else for him, save two hundred pounds by hook or crook, give his firm notice and take to a garret at £2 a week. This would give him two years. But he funks this and can't pluck up courage to do more than straddle his Rubicon. G. is at once audacious and timid, a good talker who blushes to the roots of his hair if anybody catches what he says. His talk is admirable; reducing it to print is the difficulty. It was three o'clock before I left him, in Berwick Market.

My old servant, Freddy Webster, called to-day. He is still chucker-out at his picture-palace in the Kennington Road. " You get in the row behind and take 'em by the scruff of the neck and the nose. The strongest of 'em 'as to go ! " We tried the experiment there and then, and it is so.

Jan. 4 *Friday.* Among the guests at a recent country-house party was a he-woman, six feet two, with cropped hair and neither breasts nor hips. During the day-time she wore corduroy breeches and gumboots, and in the evening a man's dinner-jacket. When they wanted her to play another rubber before dinner she said " Sorry. Must go up to shave and dress ! "

Dinner last night to Peter Page by his Savage Club cronies. Peter is going round the world on a tramp steamer in search of health. Mark Hambourg was in the chair, and supporting him were H. W. Nevinson, George Baker, Guy Church, D. A. Clarke-Smith, Buchanan Taylor, Arthur Brooks, Victor MacClure, Ernest Irving, Theo Clegg, Stanley Woodwark, G. L. Stampa, Douglas Furber, J. G. Bergel, G. McCaffrey, Julian Clifford, Parry Jones, and J. A. Very good speeches and talk, and many, many stories. Perhaps the best thing of the evening was when somebody recalled Peter's own criticism of Drinkwater's *Cromwell*: " This play is as dull as the Cromwell Road, and nearly as long."

Jan. 5 *Saturday.* An In Memoriam notice in *The Times* has the lovely quotation:

> Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
> Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Jan. 6 *Sunday.* At the *S.T.* office last night Dilys Powell told me she had spotted the following misprint in the Court and Society column:

> Lady P—— and Mr. M. B—— will give an exhibition dance at midnight, and at the dessert stage of the dinner there will be a tableau in which Miss —— will sin and a number of well-known young girls will take part."

Only the previous week a lynx-eyed proof-reader prevented me saying of an actress that she was " mistress of herself, the situation and everybody in the audience."

Would have liked to say in my article about Ford's *'Tis Pity she's a Whore* at the Arts Theatre last Sunday that the audience was 98 per cent Jewish, and that for the sake of convenience this club and theatre should be moved to Golders Green. Let's get clear about this. That the audience should be almost entirely composed of Jews is typically Jewish. If there is money to be made out of running a filthy little revue the Jews will be there. But if there is a good piece or a first-rate bit of acting to be seen they will also be there. The Ford play is good, which is why the Jews went to see it and the Christians not. The Jews have just got more brains than anybody else, and they put them at the disposal of all kinds of enterprises. If the Jews ran this country, as they very nearly do, we should have a National Theatre.

Rather pleased with my account of a visit to the Old Vic:

Old Vic. Thursday, January 3

" THE TAMING OF EUGENE ONEGIN "

A Musical Play by William Tschaikowsky

I have always hated Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and can never see reason for doing modern honour to a piece that belongs to the age of the ducking-stool. Mr. Coward may be right in saying that " women should be beaten regularly like gongs." But that is no excuse for making a play out of an exercise which husbands might well alternate with the before-breakfast skipping-rope;

though we may practise wife-beating as necessity or amusement, we can make no case for it. " The attempt to make the piece conform to to-day's taste proceeds along the lines of intuitive sympathy and love by divination. Petruchio sees in Katharine some germ of kindness that has not found its proper soil . . ." And all the rest of the silly attempt to translate into something else this medieval story of third-degree methods applied to a scold. Musing on that unkind part of his fate which sends a critic to a play he loathes, I dropped in at the Old Vic. on Thursday half-way through the taming, prepared to snooze out the rest in neat simulation of wakefulness. As an infant I slept as soon as my head touched pillow, and in my second childhood it needs only the back of a stall.

But on Thursday my sleep was something broken: I had not remembered that there was so much music in the play. Presently I half-heard somebody drone: " Such unpunctuality I do not understand: six was the hour appointed: it is now half-past." Balder monologuing than I remembered. A little later: " I hope you do not object to my second; he is an agreeable fellow though not well bred." Opening my eyes, I saw two ruffians in a snowscape measure half-a-dozen paces and discharge horse-pistols skywards, one in the direction of the Great Bear, the other towards Orion, whereupon one ruffian fell instantly, the other received assurance of his death, and the curtain sombrely fell. Consulting my programme, I found I was two-thirds through a performance of Tschaikowsky's *Eugene Onegin. J'y étais*, and *j'y suis resté.* Or, if you prefer it: There I was and there I stuck! A charming opera, though how delightfully performed it is not my province to say.

But why does Miss Baylis, whose devoted slave I am, give out, or allow it to be given out, that from the beginning of the year the sheep would inhabit one permanent fold and the goats the other? I submit that it was not my fault that I took my pigs to the wrong market, to the New Cut instead of to Sadler's Wells!

Jan. 7 Monday. Had wind of a libel action in connection with my book. Gollancz heard of it first and tipped the wink to Hamilton, which is very generous. This has

meant stopping binding, taking out two pages and shoving in 600 words. It will also delay the book a little.

A letter:

Forest Gate,
London, E. 7.

JAMES AGATE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

I have read most of your books in the past, but have just finished (to me a new one) *My Theatre Talks*. I was most interested with your " Sadler's Wells " chats. I saw Phelps there when I was a boy of 7 or 8. *King Lear—John Bull—Macbeth*, etc. Also at Drury Lane in 1864 as " Macbeth " and Helen Faucit as " Lady Macbeth." In 1870 *I played at Sad's*. The manager was my *stage* tutor Mr. C. T. Burleigh who also managed the " Old Vic," where I also played in Drama and Tragedy—T. C. King, *Othello*, etc., and *later* I was Asst. Mangr. and Stage Director for Geo. E. Belmont at " Sunny Old Sad's ! " Now, I can assure you that " Sad's " under Belmont was a gold mine. I know because I made up the a/c's. Belmont *gave up* because he feared G. A. Payne and " The Grand " and Syndicate opposition !

Now *re* Dan Leno—his *first* appearance at a real Music Hall was *not at the Middlesex* as you state, but at " The Forester's " Cambridge Hth Road ! I was with Charlie Lingwood (Chairman) and said: " Charlie. *This is* a Comedian. He'll soon be booked up," and he was. He came on as a woman with a pail and the song was " Goin' to buy milk for the twins," also an Irish song and he did a clog " wallop " ! His salary was £5.

Arthur Roberts.

Arthur was a *clerk* at the " Mutual Loan Office," in Russell St. and used to serve the writs. He and I intended joining up in a quick change Entertmt. à la Wardropers—and jointly paid the late Chas. Garvice £30 for a script of *The Harvest Home* a short farce *Potts and Trotts*, but Arthur became very ill and spat blood, so I cut my loss and finished. Arthur then joined Chappell on the beach at Gt. Yarmouth—the air cured him and his rise is history. He does *not* mention this *re* our show in his life, but above statement is fact—and this is how we were to be advertised

THE BARRINGTONS
(Cyril & Arthur)

Now Harry Randall.

You are the *only* writer who has told the truth *re* the first song he sang, at his *first real* M. Hall Engagement.

(All I can remember of chorus:)

I've done it oh my ! I've done it oh lor.
There'll be the devil to pay,
(Last line.) The meal's " ketever " today.

I wrote the lyric for Harry and delivered it to him in his little basement shop in Cl'well, where he worked as a Cutter of Crests etc. in Crystal. The last one he made was a Cats-head for Tom Lovell the Clown. Harry paid me either 10/6 or 21/–, *but he never* mentioned *this* in *his book* and it puzzles me to know *where you obtained* the information as it is so long ago since he sang it ?

Stead.

I heard him sing " The Cure " at Westons (now The Royal) in a pink and white stripe dress—with a fool's cap on head. I can also remember seeing the fight between Tom Sayers and Heenan—I was 6 then and went with my Dad and a farmer friend who had a farm near Farmboro'——

I trust this letter will not weary you, but I think perhaps you may read it with interest.

Yours faithfy,
T. C. GLENVILLE
" *An old trouper.*"

Jan. 11 *Friday.* Godson Paul came to see me to-day and I showed him James Gunn's drawing of me for *Ego.*

J. A. The black-and-white men at the Club say that the weight is not properly distributed, that the artist doesn't know which leg I'm standing on.

P. D. Perhaps, Uncle James, you haven't a leg to stand on.

Apropos of a silly play called *Father of Lies* at the Royalty I asked Paul if he knew anything of diabolism. He said: " Yes. If you throw holy water over an evil spirit one of two things happens. If he's merely a satellite it makes him sizzle. If he's a practising diabolist or the Devil himself he rises twenty-five feet into the air and spins. *And that's true !* " Paul has a great

sense of fun and said the last three words with an air of perfect conviction.

This letter appeared in *The Times*:

SIR,

Apropos the evening-dress controversy, here is a short true story. Returning from Sunday golf some time ago a friend of mine found a telephone message asking him to go over at once to the So-and-so's to make them up at bridge. He did not know the So-and-so's very well, but having nothing to do decided to go, and as the message seemed urgent, went as he was. When he arrived he found that they were a player short at one of six tables, with the men wearing white ties. His hostess cut short my friend's apology for his golf clothes by saying: " But surely, Mr. Blank, after 7 o'clock on Sunday evening everybody one knows is in evening-dress ? " My friend replied: " On the contrary, dear lady, after 7 o'clock on Sunday evening everybody I know is in a public-house. Good-night ! " And, to make good his rebuke, my friend spent the evening in The Clutch and Spanner.

Yours truly,

JAMES AGATE.

14 *Doughty Street, W.C.* 1.
Jan. 9.

This is the kind of thing which makes the Civil Service blanch with well-bred horror.

Agreed with Macdonald of the Lefèvre Galleries to take back my Duncan Grant and a Steggles at the price I paid for them. It's a wrench, but I am determined to get out of debt.

Jan. 12 *Saturday.* The death of her husband, Walter de Frece, will go near to killing poor Vesta Tilley, who is prostrated at Cannes. In the old days he used to carry her from the cab to her dressing-room in the theatre and back again. Grein said the best thing about Vesta, that when she came on the stage her face was " like a city in illumination." It is a mark of futility, as Montague said apropos of the Bernhardt-Duse controversy, to debate whether she or Marie Lloyd was the greater artist. The saloon bar of The Lamb in

Lamb's Conduit Street has an early photograph of Vesta, showing her as a semi-fledged male impersonator, dressed as to the lower half in tights, with a feminine middle-piece, and surmounting both by a man's pea-jacket and bowler hat. I shall never forget in " Jolly Good Luck to the Girl that Loves a Soldier " the tearful swagger of the homesick yet jaunty recruit.

Jan. 13 *Sunday.* Was betrayed by a maudlin article by James Douglas—trying to reconcile for *Express* readers the existence of Pain and Evil with the idea of a loving and omnipotent God—into a *Sunday Times* article of, I am afraid, a triteness positively ferocious. Excuse was a column to fill and a piffling little play about the Devil on which I could not have written ten lines. John Bright said that he should have no objection to novels if all the characters in them were good. James Douglas seems to regard God as a kind of super John Bright.

Lunched at Curt Dehn's, where there is a German governess who looks like a drawing by Blake. Went on afterwards to the Palladium to hear the *Eroica*. The orchestra was the " British Symphony Orchestra," of about forty players. I thought it sounded not so much like a reading as a reading at sight. After the first movement a militant old lady in the circle called out " Abominably played ! " This was too harsh, but I couldn't help thinking that, like the Scotchman's change, the performance was right but only just right.

Voting in the Saar takes place to-day. By the way I don't know if this thought has occurred to anybody—that if in the War Germany had been one of the Allies and France the enemy, Germany would have seen to it that France could not make war again for a hundred years. I don't know what steps she would have taken, but I *know* she would have taken them. I think she might have sterilised half the French population, or insisted that France's women should have their children by French and German fathers alternately, beginning with a German !

Took Leo Pavia to supper at the Café Royal and asked him

whether there was any justification for the statement that I never write about anything except myself.

LEO. It's an accepted fact. You only write about a play between the lines.

He also recalled some old Jew's definition of a bore—" A man whose talk comes out of one ear and goes in at the other." We were sitting back to back with Harold Dearden, who wrote a very amusing account of the fire-raisers. He told me that Leopold Harris, who heard of the book in prison, told his solicitor to ask Dearden if he would like him to autograph a copy !

Jan. 14 *Monday.* An incident and a thought.

The incident. Seeing a policeman in Holborn hold up the traffic and bend down to catch what a short, stout, ridiculous old woman who was crying horribly was trying to say.

The thought. " Snatching a fearful joy "—getting Rebecca West to review one's autobiography.

Jan. 15 *Tuesday.* Sunday's article has provoked such good letters that, in order not to tell only half a story, I must here give my half of the metaphysical argument.

" Night and day, why is it so ? " asked Mr. Fred Astaire in *Gay Divorce.* It may be that this charming artist did not confine himself to metaphysical inquiry. But the question as it stands suits my purpose admirably, and shall so stand. Night and day, why is it so ? Now to ask the wherefore of a thing is to admit its existence, for not even a hundred times convicted thief can be asked to explain a smash-and-grab raid if nothing has been smashed and nothing grabbed. Last week's theatrical ewe-lamb was a play about the Devil, concerning whom I propose to offer a few reflections. I do not say that they will be good reflections, and I will merely hope that bad reflections, like excuses, may be better than none.

The morning after the play at the Royalty I read the following:

God is love. Why does He permit evil to exist? And why does He permit pain to exist?

These are hard questions. As God is omnipotent, He could have created a Universe without evil and without pain. Why has He not done so?

I know that this is the oldest puzzle in the world, and that the human intellect has in all ages vainly endeavoured to solve it, because it is an imperfect instrument, working with only a fraction of truth as its knowledge.

As there is nothing whatever in the play to discuss, I propose to discuss this, and the reader who holds that what follows is not dramatic criticism can go and write some for himself. The difficulty, I should like to tell the author of the foregoing, is not the small amount of knowledge at Man's disposal, but his insistence upon using that amount sentimentally. Man will have it that the Universe is ordained as it would be convenient and agreeable for him that it should be ordained. In short, he postulates that it is, and then proceeds to worry because half of his observed facts will not fit. He is in exactly the position Euclid would have been in if, in his Fifth Proposition, he had tried to maintain that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are unequal. Euclid, not being a sentimentalist and finding his facts did not fit, would have accepted the conclusion that there was something wrong about his proposition and have given up stating it. Not so Man.

Let us look for a moment at the sentimentalist position, and I will promise to look as dramatically and as critically as possible. On the first page of the first book of philosophy I ever opened I read that the Universe either has a First Cause behind it or it hasn't. In this particular philosopher's opinion the chances were fifty-fifty. Now, a Universe causeless and unmotivated calls for no further discussion; the thing may as well be preposterous and Gilbertian as sane and Sullivanesque. And that's the end of that.

Now let a First Cause be postulated. Next our sentimentalist asks us to suppose that this First Cause is beneficent. Finally, he alleges that it is omnipotent. Why, then, should this

beneficent and omnipotent First Cause, which could have created a Universe without evil and without pain, have chosen not to do so? To anybody except our sentimentalist the answer is as plain as nose or pikestaff, the first plain thing about the answer being that it is not one answer but several. Any action which you or I perform has been brought about in one of two ways: either you or I chose to perform it, or we had not the freedom of choice. Whatever Cause put evil into the Universe, either put it there because it wanted to, or because it couldn't help it. In the second event the Cause shows itself as potent without being omnipotent; in the first it shows itself as not *wholly* benevolent, except in the sense that to allow Man to perfect himself through pain and evil may be the highest form of benevolence. And why should we demand good without evil? Perhaps some metaphysician will tell me whether one can conceive a thing existing without its opposite or the idea of its opposite, whether there can be light without darkness, motion without rest, heat without cold, day without night. To my mind any First Cause, while equally manifest in the evil as the good, *must be even more quintessentially existent in the battle between them*, because peace would mean inertia, or "nothing doing." And that is precisely what Creation is not for.

It is odd that on this subject the finest minds should be prone to loose thinking, and should take an exquisite sunset to be a better proof of God's existence than an east wind. There is no logical reason why "a fancy from a flower-bell" rather than a sting from a nettle should move Bishop Blougram to one of his fifty hopes. When Blake wrote:

> If the sun and moon should doubt,
> They'd immediately go out!

he could not logically mean more than I should mean if I wrote:

> If our motor-cars should doubt,
> They'd immediately conk out!

What the running motor-car believes in is the principle of the internal combustion engine and not the moral character of the man who put it together; and similarly what the sun and

moon believe is contained in the textbooks on physics. Tennyson, who was a much poorer thinker than the other two, was nearer to logic when he wrote:

> Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill.

"Somehow" is the safeguard here. The whole trouble comes from pinning God down to a definition and refusing to alter that definition when it turns out not to cover the facts. The safe plan is to leave reason out of the question, which is what Milton did when he conceived the fall of Satan as a magnificent story and cared nothing at all that, in the police-court sense, it was a pretty poor tale.

This produced two excellent letters:

First Letter:

Your "reflections" in yesterday's *Sunday Times* must have caused more discussion than all editorials rolled into one. The points you raise are most interesting.

Of course, God is not omnipotent—he cannot change the past.

If the present and future arise inevitably from the past, he cannot alter either.

He must then have preceded the past, to have created it to his liking.

(It was all the outcome of a thought.)

If we admit that as possible, then he could have created universal laws, and must have subjected *himself* to them.

That would explain why boiling water scalds saint and sinner alike.

Should the saint get away with it, the entire structure would collapse.

Second Letter:

South Croydon.

JAMES AGATE, ESQ.

SIR,

As you probably know, leading astronomers and mathematicians are looked upon as experts in philosophy and theology. In the same way your incursion into metaphysics in to-day's *Sunday Times* will be looked upon by readers as the pronouncement of an expert because of your position

in the dramatic world. The self-depreciatory statement that the incursion is made merely with the intention of filling the column and that it may be beneath undergraduate contempt will be treated as the merest eyewash. I do not for a moment believe that it is your own opinion of your article. Neither is it mine. In any case it is superior to most graduate pronouncements from the pulpit. That, however, is not high praise. As you ask for information from a metaphysician I am attempting to oblige you although I have never laid claim to such a title.

That the universe has a First Cause behind it, or it has not, is true enough, but a choice between these alternatives is not to be made by spinning a coin, nor by an arbitrary decision. That the choice must be made in the second of these ways seems to be your view. It is not so. The whole question is quite capable of argument, and, indeed, is argued by you, but under the erroneous notion that you are only dealing with a universe for which a First Cause has been postulated. Your arguments are actually in favour of there being no First Cause.

You begin with a fallacy. Given that there is no First Cause it does not follow that the universe is causeless and unmotivated. Every engine is either driven by internal combustion, or it is not. If it is not, it does not follow that it is undriven. There are many alternatives to the absence of a First Cause. There may be a first cause, a very different thing from a First Cause, for it has no capital letters. There may be many first causes, for a first cause is not necessarily a sole cause. There may be causes and effects without either a first cause or a final effect. Existence may not have had a beginning, or it may have started without a cause. Not having started, or having started without a cause, does not prevent existence from having causes and motives in addition to anything else it possesses.

There is a second possible fallacy. Causes are not necessarily motivated though you seem to suggest that they are. I am not sure that even a motivated universe need contain causes. It all depends on the definition of " cause." In any case it is a pure assumption that a universe without a First Cause is grotesque, or that, having one, it is sane.

The hypnotising effect of capital letters is extraordinary. It makes a first cause something quite out of the ordinary. A first cause having functioned has fulfilled its existence

and does not necessarily persist. If it does persist, it must either be inactive, in which case its existence is valueless, or it is active, in which case it is no longer a first cause, but has become a secondary cause. A First Cause, on the contrary, seems both to persist and to remain an active first cause. This anomaly does not seem to have met with adequate explanation. The addition of capitals also seems to turn a first cause into a God, again with capital letters. Theologians seem thoroughly to have accepted the advice tendered and to have dispensed with reason.

A beneficent creator must be omnipotent, but an omnipotent one need not be beneficent. To be benevolent is not the same thing as being beneficent. Haven't you mixed them up ? If a First Cause puts evil in the universe because it wants to, that does not show that it is omnipotent. It is merely potent, but more potent than when it puts in evil because it can't help it. Hence the introduction of pain and evil to the extent in which they already exist may be benevolent, for they may take the place of something worse. This action, however, is certainly not beneficent for an omnipotent First Cause. An omnipotent creator can reach any desired result by any means he pleases. Hence, whatever views he has for the ultimate evolution of man, there is no need for pain and evil. I would point out to you, too, that from your argument, if there should be a future life, then, seeing that man leaves this one very far from perfect, there can be little doubt but that pain and evil must persist in order to complete the perfection aimed at.

The reason why we have a right to demand good without evil from God is that we expect that treatment, so far as it is possible, from our neighbour. It is the basis of all morality and we have the right to demand it from God, at least to the full extent of his power. If society has a right to demand good from me, then we both have a right to demand it from God. A creator who cannot alter the present state of things for the better is no good to humanity as a God, and in that case it is of no importance to humanity whether he exists, or not.

You are in a state of mental confusion about things and their opposites. You cannot have opposites to concrete things and I am doubtful whether there are even opposites to abstract ideas. There is no opposite to a chair. There are either chairs, or no chairs. That is to say there are presences

and absences. Darkness is the absence of light from the eye, or the failure of the nerves in transmission, or the brain in interpretation. So far as we know there is no such thing as rest, i.e. absence of motion. There is no such thing as cold contrasted with heat. A body will be cold or hot when it is perceptibly higher, or lower, in temperature than our bodies. There is heat present in both cases. Absence of heat in matter is known as the absolute zero. It is merely the starting point of heat and there is nothing opposite to heat about it. One side of the moon has day without night. What is necessary for the formulation of ideas is separateness and variation in number, magnitude, quantity, or quality. It is relativity, in fact, and not opposites which gives rise to ideas.

When good is absent it is an evil. That may be true even if it has never been present. Actually we recognise some things as neutral, i.e. neither good nor evil. If there is such a thing at all as an opposite I should be inclined to think that neutral is the opposite to both good and evil. The fact of the matter is that there are no such things as Good and Evil. It is actions which are good, or evil. These terms are epithets, and nothing more. If there were such entities as good and evil they would be gods. As these entities are non-existent there can be no battle between them. Your argument for the existence of a God falls to the ground for this reason alone.

Peace does not mean inertia any more than not running means standing still, or, better still, lying down. Co-operation is very far from being inertia and it certainly is not battle. Battles are purely destructive and the exact opposite of creative. How in the world you manage to consider them proofs of the existence of a creator passes my comprehension. Doing nothing, too, I should have thought was always preferable to doing evil.

I am afraid that it is only by leaving reason out of the question, as you recommend, that you can make such an assertion as that "the finest minds (are) prone to loose thinking." I should think the only way the ranking of minds can be done is by estimating the logicality with which they work. Surely our views on the nature of existence are of the greatest importance. Why is it that we are so often invited to abandon reason when dealing with these matters when we are expected to use it in the affairs

of daily life ? I should have thought that if reason is needed for small things it is still more necessary for important decisions. It would be a poor way of choosing a dramatic critic to select him by the shape of his moustache, but it would be acting in an important matter without reason, though not without a reason.

Yours faithfully,

H. C. REEVE, M.A.

14.1.'35.

From which I conclude that my metaphysics are a washout !

Jan. 16 *Wednesday.* It is becoming difficult to resist the thought that *Ego* may be a success. Hugh Walpole was extremely generous about it yesterday at lunch, and the night-porter at the Savage Club, where I left it while I had supper last night, says he is going to save up for a copy. Said he had never dipped into anything like it. Just a chance that Gollancz may buy the next volume of the Diary, and Peters has been seeing an American publisher about it to-day. Jock says that it can't possibly suit America, as it has too little uplift and too much downlift ! Am still resolved to count no chickens before they are hatched.

Lunched at the Savage with Mark, Benno and Landon Ronald. Mark called Landon " Knight " all the way through the meal. " Pass the mustard, Knight," and so on. All in the best Sir Toby manner, with Landon acquiescing exactly like Sir Andrew. Discussing remarkable performances Mark said that one of the most extraordinary in his experience was of *Les Troyens* at Moscow under Rachmaninoff.

" How was the audience ? " Benno asked.

" Petrified, dear boy, absolutely petrified ! "

Mark has just finished recording all the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies, the idea being to try to popularise the lesser known or even unknown ones.

Jan. 17 *Thursday.* *The Daily Express* sent me a new contract, and accompanied it with a bonus expressive of their appreciation of my work during the last three

years. Very gratifying. Supper with George Bishop at Marie Tempest's. Still another week before *Ego* is out. I hate all this fornicating, as my old landlady, Mrs. Potter, used to say when she meant procrastinating. The Squire's wife coming to complain that Mrs. Potter's husband[1] kept putting off doing something he had promised, Edith said: "It's just like George. He's the biggest fornicator in t' village." I heard her say this.

Jan. 18 *Friday.* Sold the next volume of the Diary to Gollancz. Looks as though they liked *Ego*, of which all the review copies went out yesterday. But the deal strikes me like getting another baby before the one *in utero* is born! MUST NOT COUNT ON GETTING ANOTHER HALFPENNY OUT OF THE BOOK.

Jan. 19 *Saturday.* B'ham. All the horses well and fit. As I have put down the car, hired a Humber from Godfrey Davis for two days for two pounds ten shillings. Nice car which went beautifully.

In the evening took Albert Throup and Arthur—now my chef, butler, valet, chauffeur and factotum—to the pantomime at the Theatre Royal. *Jack and the Beanstalk* with Dorothy Ward, Shaun Glenville and Albert Burdon. A good, lavish, Wylie-esque show. Couldn't help thinking how exactly Shaun's Dame, wearing a lavender bonnet with a pink feather, resembles that other Dame—Madge Kendal! Went round to Dorothy's dressing-room afterwards and found Amy Mollison there, very distant and icy, as though she was half-way to the North Pole. Had been measuring ponies all day so decided to measure Dorothy. Without her shoes she is one inch shorter than I am, and with them about half an inch taller. A really good sort, with no nonsense about her, and a hard worker. When you talk to her you feel that it's not her coiffeur but her sunny disposition which gives her that buttercup hair. Told me she wears ten different pairs of tights in the show which, with two performances daily,

[1] See *Ego*, p. 132.

means twenty changes. Pulling them on makes the muscles of her neck ache. Very proud that her son is to play Hamlet at Oxford in a fortnight's time. Here is a good story about these delightful people. Dorothy, meeting some American managers and not particularly wanting to advertise herself as the mother of so bouncing a boy as Master Brabazon Peter Glenville, introduced him as "Mr. Brabazon." All went well until Peter said "Isn't it about time you gave me a new sports car, darling?" and Dorothy answered, "I give you too much as it is!" The Americans said nothing, but looked their horror at what they obviously thought was a real-life scene from *Our Betters*. Gave Albert and Arthur supper at the Queen's. Oysters, baby chickens and plenty of Bollinger N.V. No excuse for this wild extravagance.

The Daily Telegraph came out this morning with the announcement of the matinée for Marie Tempest's Jubilee on May 30th. This was first mooted at Livingstone Cottage after lunch on a day in March last. Mary will have nothing to do with it unless it is the most slap-up thing of the kind the world has ever seen.

Warned Mary that if she doesn't behave through all these arrangements exactly as I want her to I shall go about London alluding to the affair as her *centenary*.

Jan. 20 *Sunday.* Spent two hours at farm looking at yearlings and two-year-olds, and got to town just in time for this lovely concert:

Overture, "Hänsel and Gretel" .	Humperdinck
Symphony Letter "V" in G .	Haydn
Concerto No. 2 in C Minor .	Rachmaninoff
Nocturne, "Fêtes" . . .	Debussy
Symphonic Poem, "Don Juan".	Strauss

This is perfect programme-building, all *little* masterpieces, and with a complete absence of the four B's—Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms—and no Wagner or Sibelius. The art of programme-making appears to have died out in London, and I seldom hear of it except in connection with the Scottish Orchestra at Glasgow, and, of course, Beecham.

Not too pleased to find that whereas in the *S.T.*, I praise Roy Graham for making Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* a smooth, blond, saucy rogue instead of an authentic dyed-in-the-wool villain spouting his Webster in a coal-black voice, Ivor in *The Observer* says that he makes nonsense of the play. What I meant was that as R. G. is no tragedian this was a good way out. But I ought to have made this clear. Ivor argues that Joyce Bland's Duchess was ineffective because the opposition was too weak. But whoever heard of a really great batsman failing to come off because the bowling was too poor?

Read in Bishop's column that Gladys Cooper wants to find a comedy. Immediately wrote to Adrianne Allen, the power behind the Massey throne, suggesting Tait and Allott's *The Prickly Pear*. Cast:

Gladys Cooper
Ray Massey
Ellen Pollock
Leslie Banks.

Unless, of course, Adrianne wants to play in the show herself. Also wrote to Muriel Pratt, who has the script, and to the boys saying what I had done.

On my return I found this letter from Humbert Wolfe. Very much pleased to find I called the poem "exquisite." But I don't really fear H. W. whose bark is much worse than his bite.

*Whitehall, S.W.*1.
18*th January*, 1935.

DEAR JAMES,

Thank you so much for having sent me the book. In fact the *Observer* have asked me to animadvert upon it. I shall enjoy doing so with unexampled ferocity.

I rather thought that you were pulling my leg when on pages 166 and 167 you asserted you could never discover the author of "9.50 from King's Cross." I should have thought the mere fact that experts told you that "as poetry, technically considered it was rubbish" should have convinced you that H. W. was

Yours ever,
HUMBERT.

Jan. 21 *Monday.* Letter from Eiluned Lewis to whom I had sent a photo of James Gunn's drawing, signed by me, and saying that Eiluned *bach* was the dew on my grass:

Fleet Street,
Jan. 19th, 1935.

ANWYL MR. AGATE,

Any School of Languages might translate that for a shilling into Dear Mr. Agate, but they would not catch the warm Welsh inflection, since " bach," as you know, means more than an English " little," and " anwyl " more than an English " dear."

If we had won the match at Twickenham to-day this letter might have been written entirely in Welsh, but since we have drawn with the Saxons it shall be half and half (or 50-50, as the *Sun. Times* printers would say). But there is no half and half in my pleasure over your picture.

It seems, from the stick and the Show Catalogue in your hand, that Mr. James Gunn has caught you under the open sky, casting your eye over a trotting pony. But for me it is a picture of you coming in at the door on a Saturday afternoon, calling aloud for proofs, pen, ink, Shakespeare and matches. And I, so to speak, am your trotting pony.

I shall keep the picture till I am a very old lady, too stiff to trot and rather garrulous about the Great Days in Fleet Street.

Yours ever,
EILUNED LEWIS.

P.S. I hope the cross-headings this week are all right. I am a little nervous over " Duchess into Dumb-belle."

Eiluned may well have been " a little nervous " about her heading to my *Duchess of Malfi* article. She would have been frightened out of her wits if she had seen me dancing round the stable yard of The Three Tuns at Sutton Coldfield and tearing my hair with rage.

The Times has a lot about the Marie Tempest matinée, but such is the petty jealousy of newspapers that no mention is made of *The Daily Telegraph* which is getting the thing up. Monstrous !

Jan. 22 *Tuesday.* According to an advertisement in to-day's paper the " Q " theatre has discovered a new spelling—" Tchchov."

A jolly lot of letters. A typist writes:

To-day you return like a dog to its vomit, to the old jest about typists, this time in the *Daily Express*. It is surprising to read such ridiculous and unfounded generalisations from a man of your reputation and I can only imagine that this is the first approach of senile decay, borne out by your latest adventure of waking up in the middle of an opera instead of at *The Taming of the Shrew*.

It is strange that a man of your age (your tremblotic mouthings on the wireless seem to indicate old-age) should be so ignorant as not to know that most of the important business houses in the City employ highly trained stenographers (or typists). Many of these speak and write three or four languages and the names of Goethe, Epstein and Einstein are as well known to them as their nursery rhymes!

If you were not so ungenerous (your writing gives you away), you would employ typists who have had the advantage of a good secondary education, but of course you would have to pay them the salary they are accustomed to being paid. They would have no difficulty in taking down your ravings accurately and if encouraged would assist you with any foreign words you might like to introduce into your articles.

From my old friend, Fred Dehn:

Manchester.

DEAR JIMMIE, 21/1/35.

It was noble of you to send me a copy of EGO, but I am afraid I shall have to buy at least 3 copies. If I put it down to sneeze, scratch, or smoke it is snatched up by Helen, Paul or Olive and I have to wait until they want to sneeze, scratch, or smoke! I think it is a masterpiece and the ending really brilliant. Very many thanks for a very precious gift. Will you lunch with me on Wednesday the 30th inst? My financial position has reached the hansom-cab[1] stage and I therefore suggest the Ritz where there is plenty of room to throw the thing about. Also I have not been to the Ritz since the boom and would like to know if it is any

[1] See *Ego*, p. 43.

better in the slump. Will you try and drop me a line *by return* if you are free as I am leaving Manchester for my few days' holiday on Thursday. If we say one o'clock will you turn up by two o'clock? I don't want to drink cocktails by myself for *more* than an hour.

Yours ever,
FRITZ-FRED.

From Tait and Allott. Though the letter has only one signature, from the playwriting point of view they are one spirit and one flesh:

Newcastle-on-Tyne,
January 21st, 1935.

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

You were quite right; I was just about to put pen to paper when your letter arrived. Personally I have a nasty feeling, although I have never seen her, that Miss B—— is not our kind of actress, and, what is worse, can never imagine her in any of our comedies. (Can you, for instance, see her as Lucia in *Second Act in Spain* saying with fine abandon: "Oh, if you only knew how many face creams I've advertised"? Or as Judith in *The Prickly Pear* fighting with Simon and going through the entire play without a change of costume?) What makes me more gloomy is that Keith Winter seems to have a never-ending supply of stinkers up his sleeve.

The Twisted Smile is now completed, and a very nice job it is too. I think, at long last, we have discovered the secret of action! I start typing on Friday and the play will, God willing, be in your hands on Tuesday, February 5th. As you requested, we have kept the possibility of a Cooper-Massey-Allen-Agate-Tait-Allott alliance a dead secret.

Yours sincerely,
STEPHEN TAIT.

A letter-card from Jock who has taken to *writing* me, late at night, though what this portends I know not:

Leicester-Square. P.O.
11.15 p.m.—Monday.

Nicht zu ernst—as Schumann headed one of his piano-pieces.

This ought, of all weeks, to be a week of egomaniac banquetings and routs. If, therefore, you will buy yourself those two indispensable vols. of Arnold Bennett's Diary

(which I have already implored you to buy) *AND* treat me to lunch at Prunier's on Friday before the matinée of *Paganini*, I will wholly cancel that debt of two guineas for your wholly charming Barrie-film article which you didn't take the trouble to read, much less write.

Your unavailingly rapacious

JOCK.

Finished off a busy morning with a glance through the papers and find that G. B. S. has been getting into trouble with the Lord's Day Observance Society. Broadcasting on Sunday, the old man said that there was nothing improper about sex which is entitled to a good share of the interest in plays and films. At this the Lord's Day Observance Society got on to its hind-legs and asked the B.B.C. why they allowed the Sabbath to be desecrated with G. B. S.'s nonsense. When interviewed Shaw said he had gone into the matter years ago and in his own mind settled it once and for all, and that people had better do just what he told them and leave the reasons to him ! The old man is perfectly right. If anybody were to ask me who is the best living observer of the Lord's Day, I should say George Bernard Shaw, and on the principle that all days are the Lord's, and G. B. S. observes them all. Shaw can't fault this line of argument, for he once used it himself. Some forty years ago he was invited to lecture to the Ancoats Brotherhood in Manchester. The chairman, who was a parson, said that before he invited Mr. Shaw to give his lecture he would like his assurance that he believed in the Immaculate Conception. Shaw nodded gravely and, after some more preluding, the chairman sat down. Shaw at once rose and with that combination of brogue and twinkle which is so disarming said: " Of course I believe in the Immaculate Conception ! All conceptions are immaculate." All the same, the B.B.C. *does* ask for it when it invites G. B. S. to talk on a Sunday.

Jolly lunch at the Savage with Barry Lupino, Morris Harvey, and Billy Leonard—a wasps' nest of comedians. Morris was telling us of an endearing trait in the Egbert Brothers, who cannot help believing that they invented everything in the way of pantomime business from the clown's

red-hot poker to the paper-hanging nonsense. Barry, who is a very erudite little man and has an enormous theatrical library, said he had traced the red-hot poker business to a 13th-century morality play; and in the matter of papering a wall in which the comedians cover themselves with paste said that the date couldn't be traced. " Nonsense ! " said Billy Leonard. " That gag was invented the day they finished the Great Wall of China ! " Billy is irrepressible. Barry and I, discovering that as cousins of the late Percy Milton we must be related, proceeded to shake hands. " Gorblimey ! " shrieked Billy. " Incest ! " But Morris had the best story, about travelling down to Brighton with Arthur Roberts on the Sunday morning after the announcement of the death of the wife Arthur had not seen for years. The great comedian said he was looking forward to a breath of sea-air, and as Morris seemed surprised went on to justify himself: Better take in the ozone than brood over the stale past ! Whatever one had done it was too late to make reparation. And so on until he had reduced Morris to a state of tearful commiseration. This achieved, Arthur said: " Besides, think what a bloody fool I should look walking down Piccadilly in crape spats ! "

Peters, who is the world's champion doubter, said to-day that he would be very disappointed if *Ego* did not sell between three and four thousand copies. But I am more than ever convinced that there is not another penny in it for me. Even if we sold ten thousand copies, the bank in which Hamilton keeps his money would go smash !

Jan. 23 *Wednesday.* Luncheon at the Mayfair to Joseph Thorp, who is leaving *Punch* after being its dramatic critic for nineteen years. Present: Our host, whose name I did not catch, Ivor Brown, Herbert Farjeon, W. A. Darlington, Charles Morgan, Thorp, a man from *Punch* whom I didn't know, Horace Horsnell, Tibby Griffith and self. We ate pâté de foie gras, hot lobster, and a perfect tournedos, and drank sherry, Pouilly, Corton, Château Yquem and old brandy. Talk *very* good, except that I monopolised too much of it. Told Thorp his lunch reminded me of Sydney Smith's idea of

Heaven—" eating pâté de foie gras to the sound of trumpets." T. said instantly " There are no trumpets here except yours, James."

This conversation happened:

HIGHLY DISTINGUISHED CRITIC: Three or four times I have refused to write anything at all about a play. It seems to me that editors ought to leave it to their critics to decide whether a play is worth writing about.

OUR HOST: But even the worst play takes one out of oneself.

ANOTHER CRITIC: A brothel would do that.

H.D. CRITIC (*staggeringly*): I wish my august paper would let me write notices about brothels!

Othello at the Old Vic, with a very good Desdemona by a new actress called Vivienne Bennett. Extremely moving, in spite of the fact that she has a dimpling-dumpling face unsuited to the tragic.

Supped at the Savoy Grill with Monty and Tim Dawes. Monty told me that his colleagues in Whitehall—I know the sort, spineless, glassy-eyed nincompoops with hands like slices of cold turbot—regard my last letter in *The Times* as Being in Poor Taste.

Got home about two and sat up writing. *Ego* was just being born, and I looked out into Doughty Street saying: " And all the air a solemn stillness holds."

Jan. 24 *Ego* born.

Thursday. Gray's line was still in my mind when Arthur brought me my tea. I said " Good morning, Arthur. I don't know what sort of a day it is, but *all the air a solemn stillness holds.*"

Arthur replied: " Not half, sir. Even the coal-men are crying their wares in hushed voices! " A lot of Arthur is pure Beaumarchais.

The Times Lit. Supp. magnificent about *Ego*. A column and a quarter of stuff I should have blushed to write myself, and I have no idea who the author is. " A philistine with the conscience and equipment of an intellectual is enough to upset

anybody." *News Chronicle* first-class. Lunch in honour of the book given by Hamish Hamilton. At the Ivy. Guests were Eiluned Lewis, Harold Dearden (most amusing), Jock, and me, E. M. Delafield joined us and was witty. Marie Tempest came over and said that Willie had a great idea for the matinée. Mary to sit on a throne, with a masque of all the arts and sciences. The whole of London's, the country's, the world's genius to take part. I said : " Would you like God to do anything ? "

The Standard came in while we were having lunch. Howard Spring's notice is nonsense. He talks of the book being " chiefly external shell, not the kernel of the man, not the ego." How damned silly ! Why not say straight out that the book *is* the man and that he hates and despises him and finds him a bore. I needn't say that I am concerned with what H. S. says only in so far as it affects sales.

Dined with the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association. Poor do, and made bad speech. Humbert Wolfe very moving on the function of poetry. " Just as the art of architecture is to get the most room into the least space, so the function of poetry is to compress the most of eternity into the smallest time."

Looked in at *The Manchester Guardian* to see whether *Ego* had been carved or butchered. Review written by Harold Brighouse and very noble. I am " moving and just about George Mair and Basil Hastings."

Jan. 25 *Friday.* Went in the afternoon to the Paganini play which Ernest Milton tried to make creepy-crawly and Jock and I thought very funny. Two old sparks from the 'nineties were there, looking, as Jock said, not like impossibly young old men, but having the air of young men too old for their age. At a casual glance you would put each down as a dissipated twenty-four. Yet both were choice blooms forty years ago. One of them gave me a terrific welt right in the solar plexus. He said: " I'm so glad you're going into Autobiography. You want a wider scope. It's been obvious for some time that you've exhausted the theatre. It was particularly obvious last

Sunday." All with the frankest air of saying something nice, and that large, excessive courtesy which the upper classes use to inferiors. I said " How's the shop ? " meaning the antique business he used to run. At this, his carefully preserved eyebrows went up into the roof of the Whitehall Theatre, and for all I know stayed there. I knew, of course, that he had given up the shop long ago.

In the evening debated with Winifred Holtby at the Lyceum Club: " Should women be abolished ? " I was briefed for the defence and the whole thing was very jolly. Afterwards at the Savage Club read W. H.'s notice in *Time and Tide*. Brilliantly written, and, so far, the best *picture* of the book.

David Whitelaw at supper at the Savage told good story of Billy Leonard and Edwin Smith, the South London coroner. Coming up behind E. S. at lunch and seeing he was eating a plate of pork and rabbit, Billy said: " Can't you leave your job alone for one minute ? " This is the kind of story I love telling Monty at the Savoy in order to watch his face. On it I read elegant discomfiture, pain that I can find such vulgarity laughable, anxiety lest some Foreign Office swell has overheard, and the determination to let no low-class excess of mine interfere with his friendship for me. *Quel enfant !*

Am just a little worried by an article by Henry Williamson in *John o' London's Weekly* suggesting that lack of critical appreciation killed V. M. Yeates, the author of *Winged Victory*, and quoting my article in the *D.E.*

The book contained some admittedly good writing, but for me one page of it was enough, and as I remember there were some four hundred pages very much in the same strain. As I am antipathetic to aeroplanes I gave it to read to Arthur, who dotes on them, and he said he could not get on with it. Apart from the 'planes the war-stuff seemed just what everybody else has written. But the point is not whether I was stupid about this particular book, but whether, if I had known of it, I ought to have allowed the fact that the author was dying to influence me. I made up my mind about this years ago. See *Buzz, Buzz !* " It wasn't fair of people to do their pitiful bests, to come the human being over him. What

of the boots that let in water, the pinch of hunger, the querulousness of unpaid landladies? He winced delicately at the idea of these unspeakable things, and gave a sharper turn to the screw of savagery in his notice."

Found this letter from Allan Monkhouse waiting for me at home to-night:

Meadow Bank,
Disley,
Stockport.
Jan. 25. 35.

MY DEAR J. E. A.

It's a stupendous book and should have a success. Of course there are things I don't like; I am a quiet, respectable old gentleman, away from you hurly-burlys. But it's full of life and of good, fleeting things captured.

For your treatment of me I don't know how far to be abjectly grateful or whether to curse you—in a husky, broken voice. Six feet high—and virtues in proportion! Who says you haven't a turn for fiction? I shall have to live down the character you give me.

You live a strange, precarious life. Isn't it time you put a bit by for your old age? Or don't you mean to have any? I don't feel easy about you. Time to "patch up your old body for Heaven"? Is this an impertinence? I am getting old myself. I've got a cold and don't feel up to much. How about a comfortable old age reading Anthony Trollope? I don't know. I expect you're feeling that there's sap in't yet.

All good luck to the book and thank you for a lordly gift,

Ever your
A. N. M.

Jan. 27 *Sunday.* Tried to be at my best in *S.T.* to-day with notice of Sofaer's Othello, which I think is tame. Successfully resisted the heading "Sofaer but no farther." Just because the actor does nothing Morgan found his performance "masterly in the flowing urgency of its thought." But then Charles constitutionally agrees with Rimbaud that "action is a way of spoiling something."

Jan. 28 *Monday.* Lunched at the Garrick Club with Lawson of *The Daily Telegraph.* Present also were George Bishop, Bill Darlington, Seymour Berry, and Graham

Browne. Object—to get the Marie Tempest matinée going. Over a hundred names for ornamental committee put forward, which committee will be asked to a luncheon and never called together again. Small committee to do the real work also chosen. Went in the evening to the Empire where Joan Crawford in a silly film wickered nineteen to the dozen and showed so much white of eye that I became hypnotised and fell asleep!

Jan. 29 *Tuesday.* With some inconsiderable exceptions the reviews are the handsomest lot I have ever seen and far beyond anything I could possibly have hoped for. Incomparably the finest, of course, is Rebecca West's. This is a masterpiece of wit, writing and criticism. As she may never reprint it and as it ought not to be lost, here it is:

> Our Mr. Agate, the *Sunday Times* Mr. Agate, the world's Mr. Agate, is one of those people who create an impression of having strayed into life out of art. He is no larger than life, but certainly twice as natural. He has the concentrated and exaggerated aspect of a Falstaff or a Don Quixote, sharply focused to present its essentials to the human attention within the narrow limits of a work of art: he does not meander along with neutral tints, the damped down traits of those of us who are unframed save by seventy years or so and the whole of terrestrial space.
>
> He is as recognisable as Mr. Pickwick. When he appears in his evening clothes at the Ivy, anthropologists would have much ado to find a tribe of savages so unsophisticated that they did not instantly recognise that here was a dramatic critic. When he goes forth with his golf clubs or about his business with his trotting ponies he glows with a healthy tan, which is not, in fact, like the skin of any person who lives an out-of-door life, but which is exactly like the make-up of an actor playing the part of a person who lives an out-of-door life. His conversation falls into lines, his parleys with his friends divide themselves into scenes.
>
> When his friends speak of James Agate and how charming he is without saying who he is by, it seems an example of that contempt for authorship reprehensible in many theatres, which are covered with the names of the stars in electric lights and posters covered with Press comments, but

which omit to mention the name of the author who wrote the play.

That this impression of Mr. Agate is no mere fantasy is proven by *Ego*, his truly extraordinary autobiography. It is well known that Pirandello and Mr. Agate are not soul-mates, but this book presents a situation without parallel save in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. For it tells a story that cannot possibly be true in the world of fact.

It is not that Mr. Agate is telling lies; plainly, the facts he describes are the only and the only veridical facts about Mr. Agate. But all the same, they cannot exist in this real world. They are inconsistent, they depend on no causal principle, people simply would not let them happen.

The obvious explanation is that Mr. Agate is a character in the mind of a good but careless writer, who has made a lot of notes for the novel in which he intends him to figure, but who has just let the stuff pile up uncollated. This alone can be the reason why Mr. Agate's family, firmly embedded in Lancashire, should habitually converse in adept French. It cannot really be a consequence of Mr. Agate's grandmother having been in France as a governess, in which situation she became engaged to Guizot, but failed to marry him because she fell victim to a spinal disease which forced her to recline on a mattress, in which, doubtless for old times' sake, the resourceful girl secreted secret correspondence between Louis Philippe and her lover.

It really will not do. The explanation must be some scribbled note: " Whole family speak French fluently. Invent reason why." And it is odd that Mr. Agate should complain about the governess-Guizot legend that " I have never believed a word of the story, and the dates do not fit," for he has written novels himself and should know the stage when an ultimately quite consistent story reads as " Grandmother went France governess—engaged great man—Guizot ? Guizeau ?—engagement broken off because bedridden by illness—bedridden woman secret agent—hides letters in mattress ?—check dates." Mr. Agate can console himself by reflecting that his grandmother and possibly all the circumstances of his tangled life will be all right in the typescript.

But really there is a great deal of work to be done on the notes. The author might have settled where his hero is to live. One of the most curious features in this record is the

number of houses Mr. Agate seems to inhabit. The only reason that with all his competing interests he continues to be a dramatic critic seems to be that a certain number of theatres must lie on the intersecting routes between his homes. " Lives Barnet? Bloomsbury? Westcliff? Bayswater? "

The desperate confusion that rages in his unsettled mind on this matter is mirrored in a wonderful sentence which can serve as a sample of this uniquely mad and charming book: " I have proved to myself *on paper* that three houses with only one tenanted one are as cheap as two houses fully inhabited." And there we come on the fringe of the most astounding unreal reality in Mr. Agate's autobiography: his financial condition. This is sheer delirium. His accounts of his pecuniary affairs are more elaborate than anything in literature save Balzac's *César Birotteau*, but César was a more real personality than Mr. Agate, and his budgets are humanly possible. Mr. Agate's are not. Money flows in at the door to reward his remarkable industry, and on the hall floor turns to writs, and they have to be paid out in income-tax, with which, however, he seems to buy champagne and ponies in large quantities. Someone must have scribbled " Agate. Rich? Poor? Has Bentley because he loves comfort (comic stuff). No. Mustn't have too much money. Picks Bentley up for nothing. Must have money to enable him to show his gusto for living. No, mustn't have money, much too Bohemian. Settle all this later."

Ego should be bought by all, if only for its exceptionally pretty display of Mr. Agate's verbal gift, in which, now we have the key to it, we can recognise a certain fictional quality. He says of himself: " Of what really makes writing —the bone and the muscles under the skin of the prose—I know nothing whatever, no more than I did 20 years ago "; and there is something of the truth in this. The author's notes run: " Great writer. Brilliant. Witty. Superb critic." But when authors invent great writers they are apt to leave out the subject-matter of their greatness; and so it is with Mr. Agate.

His work is curiously without steady direction: he never seems to be travelling from one ascertained truth in the hope of arriving at another one; he seems rather to be using his five senses to observe any object that comes along

without reference to any observations he made yesterday or may make to-morrow.

But what a glorious set of senses Mr. Agate possesses! Rarely are we as grateful to the writers who know all about the bones and muscles as we are to Mr. Agate for his pages on trotting ponies; for his capture of an elusive beauty of York Minster, in his description of its stone as "yellow, crisp, and *eatable*, like the crust of apple pie!"; for his tribute to a certain real but unfashionable loveliness—"the note of Southend is pearl"—and his picture of a storm on the Thames estuary; and fifty per cent of his stories. For they are like the little girl with a curl on her forehead, and half are not good at all and the rest are first-rate.

Mr. Agate has thrown in some excellent critical writing about Sarah Bernhardt by his sister, Miss May Agate, some interesting letters, notably from Mr. James Bridie, and some admirable illustrations, including a quite exquisite photograph of Sarah Bernhardt playing draughts with her manager. This is a grand sausage of a book.

There is also an exquisite drawing of our Mr. Agate himself. It goes far to explain why this is an entrancing book. It is not enough to read it and possess it. One would like to organise some graceful national demonstration in its honour. For symbolic homage there might be put an end to the pretence that the agate is only a semi-precious stone. Really, there is not anything much better than our Mr. Agate, save Mr. Pickwick and such bright diamonds of literature.

It seems to me that this would have been considered a masterpiece even in the Golden Age of the Eighteenth Century which rated wit higher than it is rated now.

Jan. 30 *Wednesday.* Lunch yesterday with Norman Collins at the Reform Club; I didn't know there were so many respectable people in London. For a publisher, N. C. is extremely jolly. He is writing a tragedy in the Websterian mode, to end with the line: "Her winding sheet shall be my handkercher." Told me several good stories, and I told him one about a party at which there was discussion of X, a well-known dramatic critic who has been booming away for donkey's years.

FIRST GUEST. It's time X was dead.
SECOND GUEST. But he *is* dead.
J. B. PRIESTLEY. By God, I wish he'd stiffen!

Jan. 31 *Thursday.* Invitation to appear on the stage at Balham Hippodrome. Whether twice nightly not stated. Have instructed Jock to send courteous refusal.

As I write, the wireless is in full blast, or rather whimper, at Sibelius's 4th Symphony, Royal Philharmonic Society Concert, Beecham conducting. Very lovely and not at all what I should call a symphony. Why should it be? One of the Savage Club's many conductors told me recently that there was a time when the Society was so hard-up that it couldn't afford to engage a virtuoso, and the solo part in the concertos was played by anybody who happened to be passing. On one occasion, said Herman Finck, there was no audience except the bust of Beethoven. I expect this is an old joke. To-night's concert began with Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony. Ernest who is sitting with me, says that to turn Christian was the most Jewish thing Mendelssohn ever did!

Sales at four o'clock to-day, just under 1,400.

Wire from Brother Mycroft[1]: "Regret delayed congratulations on *tour de force* writing fully having read twice."

My doubts on the merits of the book as a book are now settled; if it gets past Gustave it will do.

Beecham has now got on to the Beethoven No. 5. What a waste of a conductor! I believe that if I waggled a stick in front of this symphony it would stir its old stumps in exactly the same way. All the same, T. B. is making it sound like Rossini!

An amusing mail has just arrived. It contains:

(a) Invitation to judge at the Royal Norfolk Show.

(b) Letter from Buckie Taylor, who as a kid lived in the Lower Seedley Road, Manchester. This makes four of us born within half-a-mile of each other—Buckie, Sidebotham, me and Walter Greenwood, author of *Love on the Dole*. Buckie writes: "I elected to be a Unitarian because I had always thought one

[1] See *Ego*, p. 30.

God enough for anybody. . . Once I went in school hours to a slaughter-house. There came a terrific storm with lightning and thunder and torrents of rain. I was very scared because I thought I was being punished by my one God. I was terribly good for weeks afterwards."

(c) Letter from Lionel Fielden asking if he should go to India for five years as controller of Broadcasting. *Pros.* 350 millions without wireless, the fact that he enjoys teasing pukka sahibs, and the heat, which suits him. *Cons.* Television at home likely to give him new scope. Loss of friends. Acquisition of liver. I shall tell Lionel that he really must make minor decisions like this for himself.

(d) From my brother Edward this superb letter:

Clapham Common, S.W.4.

30/1/35.

DEAR JIM,

I saw a copy of *Ego* at May's on Sunday. I think it a very handsome volume. I have seen half-a-dozen of the best papers' criticisms. To my mind, the most satisfactory is *The Times Lit. Supp.* I am waiting till it gets into the library here to read it quietly. It is sure of a sale. There are one or two points that I shall mention—an extensive exposition of the æsthetics of Autobiography you are sure to get from brother Mycroft.

> " We do not like to see French words introduced into English composition . . . but it is better to use a French word than to misuse an English word." (Lord Macaulay.)

Mycroft would have said this off his own bat; I can only do it by quotation. I could not have failed to find the passage, but he could never have discovered it—there's the difference between us ! Oh how second-hand is my little mind !

> " The rage for horses has become a positive epidemic; many persons are infected with it whom one would have credited with more sense." (Lucian.)

That is naughty of me and, moreover, third-hand, as I don't know a word of Greek !

> " The ancients oftentimes thought a life well spent in polishing one single book; we moderns on the contrary

can no sooner propose anything, but we are daily importuned to know when it is to come out." (Simon Ockley—Introd. *History of the Saracens*, 1708.)

" Certains auteurs, parlant de leurs ouvrages, disent: ' Mon livre, mon commentaire, mon histoire, etc.' Ils feraient mieux de dire: ' Notre livre, notre commentaire, notre histoire, etc.' Vu que d'ordinaire il y a plus en cela du bien d'autrui que du leur." (Pascal's *Pensées*.)

This, however, is not applicable to *Ego*; only it is such a jolly quotation, I thought you'd like it!

The photo of you and Gus on the sands is very quaint. Gus even at that age is alert, confident, authoritative, with spade erect. But I am sure you did not look like that! A doped walrus! I admire your Concerto! Typical is the love of grace notes and the marking of *cresc.* even before the music starts! If it were played in Chelsea studios as the latest thing in Poulenc or Satie, how those sandy beards would quiver in ecstasy!

Yours ever,
EDWARD.

Cable of thanks from Charles, mon deuxième secrétaire, who is now damming something or other in Egypt. Generous of him to spend money on a cable.

Feb. 1 *Friday.* Arthur ill. I noticed when he was lighting the fire this morning that he was shaking all over, so I sent him to bed. Very busy all day; looked in once or twice and found him asleep. Fenton called and gave A. some aspirin and hot whisky and he seemed better. About tea-time said he felt all right except that he was a bit light-headed. Didn't like the look of him and took his temperature. Found it was 104 so 'phoned for doctor who came at once and said A. had got pneumonia. Rang up St. Pancras Hospital which had the Ambulance here in less than a quarter of an hour! Difficulty with A. who wouldn't go to hospital and insisted upon dressing and going to his mother's. All this with the Ambulance men at the door. Didn't want to use force, so I finally left Jock with him and he persuaded A. to go to hospital.

Arthur is fair and smooth-mannered. But under that gentle exterior there is the real Arthur, who might be made out of cold steel. A complete realist, with no illusions about anything and as much sentiment as a rabbit-trap. Extremely obliging and will do anything for anybody without asking. Difficult to persuade and impossible to coerce. Jock and he have an annoying habit of putting their heads together, and then I know they are plotting Something For My Good. He is the finest driver I have ever sat behind, a voracious reader, a considerable wit, and under my tuition has become a very fair judge of a harness horse.

Sales of *Ego* up to this morning 1,600. Second edition preparing, and I received in time a letter from Eddie Marsh pointing out half-a-dozen tiny errors which had escaped everybody else's vigilance.

Had arranged to start for Brighton at six. Actually got off at ten. Took Leo to dinner at the Club, and as this was virtually the only food I had had, was so sleepy after it that I knew nothing between stepping into the car in Adelphi Terrace and getting out at Brighton. On reflection this is not strictly true, as I woke up once and heard Leo saying: " Not many people are privileged to give affection; most of us waste it." The choice was between coming down by train and staying at Royal Albion, or hiring a car and putting up at Harrison's Hotel. Chose the latter. Very quiet and comfortable here, excellent plain cooking and extremely clean. Also absurdly cheap, and even the dog remembers you. Or seems to, which is the whole art of hotel-keeping.

Feb. 2 *Saturday.* Motored to Worthing. Leo in great form. Noting some workmen tinkering at a good Georgian building Leo said " Business as usual during the deteriorations." Also told me a story of X——, a well-known pianist and teacher suspected of flirting, and worse, with his pupils. An irate mother called one day and said to the maid who opened the door, " Is Mr. X—— giving my daughter a lesson ? " The maid drew her apron across her nose and said: " Not now 'e ain't, mum. I can 'ear the piano."

Went for a stroll on the front and noted that all the women looked like Cicely Courtneidge in 'Arringay mood. Stood for some time leaning over a rail while Leo tried to quote Homer and keep his hat on simultaneously.

Lunched at Warne's Hotel, where the food even at half-past two was excellent. Taking up the bill of fare Leo said: "Are we going to eat or tell our pasts, James? I'm in my most veracious mood." I said, "Do you spell that with an 'o' or an 'e'?"

Later Leo was seized by a sudden attack of pianism, owing to the discovery that the hotel piano was in tune. He made a terrific onslaught on Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue followed by Chopin's F minor Fantaisie. Both very fine, and listening to him I felt like a very small King of Bavaria. To turn on the wireless is one thing; to be played to alone is another. Leo reminded me that I once gave him the piano score of a Mozart Piano Concerto, with my name on it and the date 1890. This shows that I must have played or at any rate studied the work at the age of thirteen!! This afternoon Leo made the hotel rock, but not so dangerously as Charlie Openshaw says Westminster Abbey is rocking owing to Dickens turning in his grave at his and Ethel Dickens's adaptation of *Great Expectations* shortly to be produced with Martin-Harvey as Magwitch.

Dined at the Royal Albion. In the smoke-room before dinner Leo had a talk with, but did not introduce me to, a youngish, very well-groomed man-about-town. After he had gone Leo said: "I was once asked to settle a dispute as to whether that fellow had been at Eton or Harrow. I answered, truthfully, that I couldn't decide the point, as when I first knew him he was third footman to Lord B." He went on. "I stood in the dock with him in 1902 on the charge of resisting the police outside the old Spaten Buffet in Piccadilly Circus."

During dinner the band, or some of it, played "Softly awakes my Heart," arranged for solo violin with a modicum of piano. When it was over, Leo called the head-waiter and said, "Kindly ask them to play the Ninth Symphony."

Feb. 3 *Sunday.* At breakfast Leo said: " I can't see why you don't preface your new Diary with another account of your life. It could be quite different and you could call the book *Alter Ego*."

We had a drink at the Metropole before lunch and Leo said: " The worst of this place is that they let in too many Christians." At lunch, and apropos of a well-known homosexual, he said: " I hear he is writing an autobiographical novel called *Lui et Lui*." As Jock said the other day: " Old Pavia is a rancid and venomous toad, but his wit is unending ! "

I feel I ought to say what Leo looks like. He is sixty, middle-sized, with a bullet-shaped head cropped close, and extremely short-sighted. This makes him screw up his eyes, thus increasing the resemblance to an india-rubber doll whose expression changes at will. He invariably says the wrong thing, but deliberately and at the top of his voice. A gormandiser without a palate. Extremely untidy, and I remember that one day after he had tried to cook for me I found stumps of asparagus sticking to the bottoms of the chairs. Yet this apparently warped and twisted creature is possessed of greater kindness of heart, if he likes you, than almost anybody I know, though affection with him generally takes the form of bickering. A great reader with a wonderful, unprecise memory. A brilliant musician *manqué*—largely because he has always gone out of his way to annoy people who have tried to help him. If I had to put him in three words I should say—a Jewish Dr. Johnson.

It is a unique sight to see this odd creature ambling along a London street with his head on one side and pouring out invective to which Ernest Fenton impassively listens. Fenton is over six feet and looks like a vicious Renaissance cardinal out of a play by John Ford. Both are a bit of the 'nineties which has unaccountably survived.

My fresh air allowance at Brighton has been limited to twenty minutes on the front at Worthing yesterday, and the walk to lunch and back to-day. The rest of the time taken up with another article on *Love on the Dole*, about which I already

have one and three-quarter columns in the *S.T.* Sometimes I find it easy to do two or even three articles on the same play; at other times it is like—as Rebecca West said of reviewing a novel twice—being sick off an empty stomach. The worst of over-work is that I have to do the stuff I really want to do in odd moments when other people would be playing or resting. It is now a quarter to five, and am leaving for London, with six books, including a novel of five hundred pages, to read between now and mid-day to-morrow. The *S.T.* cut out my notice of the new play at the Criterion. Here it is: " I do not propose to bother about this one. I sat it through, and have nothing to say."

Telephoned the hospital on arriving home. Arthur " still very ill, on the danger list and I can go any time." It seems that he still maintains that there is nothing wrong with him, and Leo and Ernest have persuaded me not to worry him to-night but to leave it till morning. My impulse is to go to the hospital now, but as my impulses are mostly wrong shall do as I am told.

Two letters from the family.

From Edward:

Clapham Common,
Feb. 1/35 *S.W.*4.

MY DEAR JIM,

I have, by now, had opportunity of reading *Ego* properly, and hope my total impression may not be unacceptable to you. I know you don't think much of my literary critical faculty—neither do I—but a few stray remarks may not prove foolish and might even be useful.

The general effect on me, then, is one of *honesty*. Not as if a man said, " I know I'm a rapscallion, but I can't help it," but as if he said, " I know I'm a rascal, and I *could* help it—if I chose." And in that " if I chose " lies the comedy and the tragedy of the book. You really make yourself blacker than you need be painted; and if this sophism of yours may attract some, be sure it will repel others.

Yet, in this specious and twisted outlook, the book is *honest.*

Another great point in your favour is the book's originality of form. I suppose there are many autobiographies these days: statesmen; clowns; actresses, fallen out;

financiers, found out; Oxford dons, down and out. I do not read them, but I am told they are *all alike*, each according to its class. But I would swear that yours, in *its* own class, is something different. I would not compare it with the Autobiography of Edward Gibbon, or the Journal of John Wesley (about whom Johnson said: " He can talk well on any subject "); but it reminds me most strongly of Horace Walpole's Memoirs, and Letters. A great critic said of these two works: " He keeps the mind of the reader constantly attentive and constantly entertained. His superiority is seen not in industry, not in learning, not in accuracy, not in logical power, but in the art of writing what people will like to read."

And that hits your talent off to a nicety.

But beware of one or two things ! Over-emphasis defeats its own object. One adjective properly chosen is often more efficacious than five. For, " qui ne sait se borner, ne sut jamais écrire."

Ever yours

EDWARD.

From Mycroft:

Jan. 27/35

Manchester.

DEAR JIMMIE,

I have put off writing to you about *Ego* to give myself a chance of reading it through carefully twice, which I have now done ! As your dedicatee, or whatever the word is, I am of course obliged to write to you whether I want to or not. But I *do* want to. And for once I am not going to be critical, for the simple reason that I am a logical person and realise that criticism of an autobiography is necessarily narrowed down to one issue only, and that is whether it is a sincere portrait or it isn't, and as on that score I am completely (or practically) satisfied, the result is that I am disarmed at the start. If a criminal makes a confession before execution one does not criticise it as a work of art; one only says: " Has this nasty piece of work told the truth about himself ? " Similarly with all testaments, they stand or fall by their sincerity, and sell or don't sell according to the market for the personality itself. In your case, whatever traits people may dislike about the book, the superfluous number of (a) cheap jokes, (b) indecent allusions, (c) French quotations, (d) the absorption in a circumscribed entourage of second-class people—all these must count for

good in so far as they portray yourself. They need no further justification than dislike of the author. Whatever people may like about the book—for instance, the ease with which it builds up a single personality from apparently irreconcilably varied human interests; the get-up of the book with its charming portrait; its interest in little things; these have to be squared up with the fascinating James Agate and see if they ring true or are merely self-conscious.

There is only one lapse into fine writing that I have discovered—that is the passage about the Brontë grave, which is as good as anything you have done except one chapter about Amy in *Responsibility*. Funny, I was reading that again when I received *Ego*, and was saying to myself "What a novel a blue pencil could have made of this!"

There is one fundamental mistake about the book—that is, the title. It is the *very worst* title for an autobiography. You fell nicely into the trap, of course, because at first sight it seems perfect, but don't you see how bad it is? It strikes a self-conscious note at once. If only you had let the insane egoism of the book speak for itself—but no, like the comedian you are, you had to laugh at your own joke in advance. By the number of people who don't agree with me about this I know I must be right.

How well that odious Rebecca West sums up your æsthetic in the *S.T.* It is, of course, your fundamental fault that you haven't got a philosophy. If that is what she means—but the creature simply can't write sense—much too clever always. She has a long story in last month's *Nash's* which just gibbers.

My letters are damned good, if you ask me. I was rather afraid of their publication, but now object to the photo rather more!

Well, whatever you may think I think about *Ego* I can tell you this, me lad, that whenever and wherever I open it I must go on reading—so there. That ought to be good enough for any egoist.

Yours ever,
GUSTAVE.

Feb. 4 *Monday.* Telephoned the hospital, which says that Arthur is "fairly comfortable."

JOCK. They always say that. In a hospital you're either comfortable or you're dead.

Amusing post-bag. A young woman in County Down sends me a play which begins with the heroine cantering up an avenue on a chestnut mare. Also a letter from Winifred Graham hoping I don't mind her using my surname for a leading character in her sixty-third novel, *Hallowmas Abbey*. In the end Agate, who is a villain, sets the Abbey on fire and is consumed, and the book ends with the owner thanking God the haunted Abbey is in ashes and selling the site for a crematorium !

In Desmond MacCarthy's lovely book *Experience*—it's a bad title but the stuff is as readable as pie-crust is eatable—I came across a passage which, if I had known of it before, would have gone on to the front page of *Ego*. Desmond is discussing the fatal propensity of biographers, critics and moralists to judge people and things by the wrong standards:

> One who wrote of Bulwer-Lytton complained that in relation to his troublesome wife he did not behave like a gentleman. The standard applied must have been severe. I know what happened. The critic was comparing Lytton's behaviour with that of men who would never have got in such a predicament with their wives at all. Biographers, critics and moralists are always doing that. Has a man got into debt ? His behaviour in that trying circumstance is compared with the hypothetical behaviour of, say, a man like Franklin, who would never have got into debt. Does a passion make hay of a man's life ? His struggles are dubbed feeble by his biographer because Cromwell would have got the impulses under. Does another write a play on a theme which Ibsen would never have chosen ? He is hauled over the coals for not conducting his plot with Ibsen's consistency.

The sentence would have been exactly right for *Ego*. In the essay on Chess there is another extremely interesting passage:

> I am told that in the abstract world of mathematics, the methods of one man will reveal his individuality to fellow-mathematicians as clearly as a writer's style reveals him to literary men. It is the same in chess. True, you and

I, reader, are unlikely, when playing over a match between, say, Lasker and Rubinstein, to detect in the moves of the former a magnificently deep vascular temperament, or in those of his adversary the refined tranquillity of an ascetic artist, diffident but of great integrity. But let us not be too much surprised if in the Q-Kt3, QR-B1, etc. etc. of Schlechter's game with John, Réti sees " a love of Nature " and " the grace and airiness of Viennese music."

I know exactly what Desmond means. I too have to keep a check upon myself less I fall into the mistake of dismissing Réti's " grace and airiness of Viennese music " as nonsense. Only the other day I was praising Neville Cardus for describing Woolley's batting in terms of Meredith's:

> Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
> Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.

I praised him still more for his justification of the seeming absurdity:

> I admit, O reader, that an innings by Woolley has nothing to do with owls and dusk and starlight. I am trying to describe an experience of the fancy; I am talking of cadences, of dying falls common to all the beauty of the world. My argument, in a word, is concerned not with Woolley, the Kent cricketer, but with that essence of his batsmanship which will live on, after his cricket is done with, after his runs and his averages have been totted up and found much the same as those of many other players.

Letter to Brother Mycroft:

5th February, 1935.

DEAR WHISKERS,

Your letter a little dashes my spirits; such enthusiasm as there is in it is like the chill taken not off a good claret but off a cold bath. I think you would have thought the book less vulgar and less insanely egoistic if you had seen the first draft. What nonsense I'm talking—I mean the first four or five drafts. Perhaps you will some day, though you will have to go to the British Museum to see them under glass!

You are wrong in two ways. First, about the title, which disarmed the entire Press and was chosen for that purpose.

If I had called it *My Life* or any title which did not confess to the egotism the Press would have seized on that quality to the exclusion of everything else. The reviews would have been bloody, and my head would have been bowed. Edward has made the better point that, like Touchstone's Audrey, the Diary, whether ill-favoured or well-favoured, is my own and nobody else's. Open most autobiographies at random and you can't tell whether the author is an archbishop or an actor because they are all about what they said to Lady Oxford at a party at the Prime Minister's.

You are also wrong about "that odious Rebecca West." Or right only in the sense of:

Thisby the flowers of odious savours sweet!

I expect the story you dislike is one of the four I admired so immensely in her new book *The Harsh Voice*. Jock says that Proust is Proust and West is West, and that Rebecca wishes the twain were a little nearer meeting. But then, that's a wasp!

It's nice to know that wherever you take up the book you have to go on reading. I have the same experience myself!

Yours ever,
JIMMIE.

Feb. 5 Tuesday. The post brought *The Twisted Smile*, Tait and Allott's new comedy. Am reserving judgment. Read it through before I got up and delivered it to Adrianne Allen at lunch time with the note: "If you and Gladys can't make a job of this you'd better stick to pathos!"

Letter from Mycroft who is in a great state about the choice of George Robey for Falstaff in Sydney Carroll's forthcoming production of *Henry IV*:

> The keynote of Falstaff is nobility in disruption, but it is the cutting of an entail seen from the angle of a Debrett, not of the gutter. It cannot be played by a genius in low comedy. It cannot be realised by anyone whose nearest approach to Shakespearean interpretation has been to lampoon it. As well expect Heath Robinson to turn engineer!

And:

> Mere technical difficulties are enough to defeat any

music-hall comedian from the start. Does one prepare for, say, the Elgar Concerto by playing in a jazz band all one's life? This is not an outrageous comparison. The speeches of Falstaff, apart from their not being blank verse—which perhaps increases their technical difficulty—call for a training and equipment equal to those necessary for Hamlet. As a mere feat of elocution consider Falstaff's description of his army (Part I. Act IV. Scene 2) 'If I be not ashamed of my soldiers . . .' etc. This calls for powers of virtuosity which only a great actor can possess.

And again:

Am I dreaming, or did I hear that Charlie Chaplin was going to play Hamlet? On artistic, traditional, national, reverential (for want of a better word) grounds, what must the Germans, the French, or even the Japanese, think of us!

I agree. But one shouldn't pre-judge any man of genius, and we shan't know what Robey will do with Falstaff till he does it. He may get entirely away from Robey, and it is a foolish argument that if he does there is no point in Carroll engaging him.

The Manchester Guardian ends its leader:

It is a chance to add something really memorable to the traditions of the English stage. Mr. Robey may do it, and that without ceasing to give a considerable measure of his own robust self. He may be quite sure of one thing. Any number of people will gladly turn out to see him try.

That's the whole point. Nobody will go to see Shakespeare; thousands will go to see Robey. I personally think the casting indefensible, but if I were in Carroll's place I should do the same.

Found when I came to do this week's *D.E.* article that I had not read enough books, so I had to persuade Jock to do one for me. So long as his "ghosting" for me is only done when I am ill and is less than decimal 1 per cent of the total output, I think the highly occasional subterfuge is as honest as this world calls for. He acquiesced very grumpily, which in him is a good sign, as alacrity is generally the reverse.

Anyhow he took the novel home to bed with him and turned up in the morning with this little masterpiece:

> There comes a time in this first novel when its precious crew—a lady weary of her virtue and four gallants hot in pursuit—go to Perthshire to shoot grouse. One almost passionately hopes for an accident whereby at least two of the worthless, witless gang may get themselves dispatched. But no!
>
> All are brainless and all exceedingly rich. In such intervals as sex allows, they hunt a little, fish a little, paint a little. The heroine even has a talent for music: "She had a natural gift for the piano and could ramble on indefinitely through the gamut of opera, dance music, and the lighter classics with an easy familiarity which made it a pleasure to listen for those who were not highbrow in their musical taste. Her technique was poor, but her ear was true, and the printed notes meant nothing to her, for she never used them."
>
> This husky snowdrop—six times at least we are told that her voice has the modish timbre—is culled at the end. But the climax is deliriously deferred, three gallants having first to be foisted, repelled, and deceived respectively. Her bosom friend, adept in Shepherd Market slang, advises her to "take a little trouble and not be so *smell-face*!" This is parried with the wager: "I'll bet you a pair of the best silk stockings that I'm not a virgin by Christmas." The book ends around Christmas.

"Husky snowdrop" is the phrase of a born writer and a wit, which are two reasons why no London paper will ever seek him out. *Ego* ought to have made Jock's quality abundantly clear. If newspaper editors really edited, or proprietors proprieted, half Fleet Street would have rung me up during the last ten days to find out Jock's terms for leaving me.

Feb. 6 *Wednesday.* Arthur still very ill, though the hospital reports a "slight improvement" this morning.

Bengal Lancer at the Carlton. Jock said: "This is like those novels Maud Diver goes about India writing on a howdah!" The other day he described Disraeli's novels as "a mass of screaming Jewish *chichi* in gilded saloons in the Dolomites."

Formal invitation from Peter Glenville, Dorothy Ward's boy, to propose the toast of the Drama at the O.U.D.S. supper after the last night of his *Hamlet*. Delicious postscript: " I hope you liked Mamma's panto."

Feb. 7 *Thursday.* Grand notice in *Punch*. Reading over my shoulder Jock said " A fearless and enormously recondite critic be blowed ! I'm your recondity !

Gave Hamish Hamilton lunch at Café Royal. He presented me with a copy of *Ego* bound in blue calf. Quite lovely. The inscription records that it celebrates the second impression. He is to 'phone me the moment the first edition of 2,000 is sold out.

Feb. 8 *Friday.* At ten o'clock this morning the telephone rang. It was Hamish !

Feb. 9 *Saturday.* The position I foresaw has arrived. The book has gone off with a bang as I thought it would. I had never any doubts about its " powerful rhyme " a hundred years hence, but only about its reception at the moment. It is now that I must not start building false hopes.

Saw Arthur yesterday and smuggled some champagne past the door-keeper. Found him propped up in bed and looking better than I expected. Still very pale and weak though I gather he was beginning to be interested in the nurses. One of them said he was getting cheeky, which was a good sign.

Savage Club dinner, the Lupino family in the Chair. All the pictures in the room had been transformed, cartoons being gummed on to the frames except when there was glass over them, in which case the portraits were made into grotesques by the use of coloured chalks, old Odell being turned into a magnificent pantaloon. On the tables were newspapers instead of table-cloths, and on the top table among the pantomime joints were the red-hot poker originally used by Grimaldi, and his harlequin sword. I think I handled this with as much reverence as if it had been Kean's sceptre for Richard III. The meal was boiled pork and pease pudding.

Feb. 10 *Sunday.* *The Observer* gives *Ego* among the week's best sellers. This is becoming very trying.

Recital at Palladium by Moiseiwitsch. Programme:

Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue . .	Bach.
Sonata, F minor, Op. 57 . . .	Beethoven.
Carnaval, Op. 9	Schumann.
Sonata, B minor, Op. 58 . . .	Chopin.
Variations on a Theme by Paganini .	Brahms.

Odd that the Chopin, of which I am normally very fond, seemed thin. In the ordinary recital this piece is "out by itself," as we say of a horse, whereas this programme was a banquet of *pièces de résistance*, due to the fact that Benno was repeating the one he gave at his first London recital exactly twenty-five years ago, when of course he wanted to show how much he could do. People have never quite understood that it is only when you have made your reputation that you can afford not to sow with the whole sack. An established critic can write about a play: "The play was bad and the acting middling." But this is no good to a young man writing his first notice, because he has got to draw attention to himself whether the play is worth it or not. This accounts for the ridiculous way I used to over-write, though perhaps I ought not to have kept it up for quite so long.

In the evening dined at Stanley Rubinstein's. Also present, Benno and his wife, Mark, and sonsy Irene Scharrer. Just as dinner started, Backhaus in the Brahms B flat Concerto came through on the wireless from Berlin. This was great fun, the others all playing detective and listening eagerly, but quite without hope, for a wrong note. Mark said he didn't think Backhaus had ever played a wrong note in his entire career, while Benno observed that he had never known him cheat to the extent of leaving out a right one!

What with the concerto and the clatter of knives and forks and Mark shouting to everybody to keep quiet, the room was pandemonium, rising to its height when in the bubbling *coda* this convocation of politic pianists joined hands and did Backhaus the honour of singing the *coda* with him.

José Levy came in after dinner and we played bridge at a shilling a hundred. By some queer chance I cut Mark almost every rubber, and he held yarborough after yarborough, one hand having nothing higher than the eight of Clubs. I held 150 aces four times and 100 honours five times, and magnificent cards all the evening, with the result that I lost only seven bob.

In the cab going home Mark said Anton Rubinstein was far and away the greatest pianist he had ever heard, though he thought Liszt might have been greater. Thinking that modern pianoforte playing must have advanced like billiards—i.e. Roberts was first-class in his day but not a patch on Lindrum —I asked whether Rubinstein would have been up to all the modern difficulties and Mark said Yes, undoubtedly. Noted how extraordinarily fresh the air was outside his house in Regent's Park, and Mark said it is always like that. Drank a glass of brandy with him in a corner of the dining-room between a Raphael and an attributed Giorgione!

Feb. 11 Letter from Rebecca:
Monday.

Avenue Kléber,
Paris.

DEAR JAMES,

I can think of no message to your brother save "Go on, brave boy, your trembling pen is pure!" which, as of course you remember, was how Clement Scott began his notice of George Bancroft's first play. Use the letter, of course.

Blessings on you.

REBECCA.

P.S. But what can the poor dumb animal mean about "The Addict" in *Nash's*? I wrote it in four days, and it gibbers about as much as the late Lord Salisbury. Read it and see.

I thought I had to go out, but I haven't for another three minutes. So I shall comment on your philosophy. I don't think it's your fault that you haven't a philosophy. I think you must have one (though it's scattered and unfinished like everything in you) to make such a positive effect. But you never ask yourself when you write what it is. You strike me to an extraordinary degree as not mobilising your own knowledge and experience when you write. Desmond, now,

has everything he ever knew at his finger-tips during the writing of each of his articles.

(But this makes him awfully like the Proust character whose knowledge was like the books in a revolving bookcase that was spun round all the time.) This only means that I think you are much greater than anything you have written, but that I'm very grateful for what you have written.

Had such good *cassoulet* for lunch to-day!

Love,

R.

But why do Rebecca and Brother Mycroft insist that I must be wholly serious like Matthew Arnold? Why can't I just be a soap-bubble reflecting all I see with perfect exactness once allowance has been made for the curve of my temperament?

Sent the following to Tait and Allott:

11*th February*, 1935.

DEAR TAIT AND ALLOTT,

Too busy to be bothered with answering in detail your hellish jorum.[1]

But you've just got to believe this, whether you like it or not. To anybody except the authors your three comedies are all alike. You have worked on them and they are identities, like triplets to a mother, though indistinguishable to anybody else except by wart or mole.

Think of any well-known comedy and you will realise that it remains in your mind by something outside its love-interest. *David Garrick* has its drunk scene, *Quex* its bedroom drama. *Charley's Aunt* bears no resemblance to *Hay Fever*. *What Every Woman Knows* is not in the least like *The Admirable Crichton*, and these have nothing in common with *The Return of the Prodigal* or *The Importance of Being Earnest*. When you think of *The Man from Blankley's* you see a dinner-table, and when *Eden End* is mentioned you think of a doctor and his two daughters. Don't you see that each of these comedies has its own milieu, and that *Lord and Lady Algy* could not be confused even by a Hottentot with *The Doctor's Dilemma* or *The Elder Miss Blossom?*

[1] Mercifully withheld from the reader.

Your three comedies, on the other hand, are all about arty, witty people living in similar flats in the same part of Chelsea. I assure you that already I can only distinguish *The Twisted Smile* from the other two by remembering that it is the one with the German woman. As for *Second Act in Spain* and *The Prickly Pear* I have not now the least idea which is which, and so far as I am concerned you could interleave them with one another and they would be just as good.

Up to now you have produced nothing but wit, and that by itself won't do. YOU MUST GET HOLD OF A PLOT, and I don't care whether you find it in the *Family Herald*, the early plays of Labiche, or the Old Testament.

Yours ever,

JAMES AGATE.

P.S. Why, damn it, even Lonsdale can think of better plots than you ! If he has only four characters in a play, at least he takes them to Scotland in a snowstorm.

Feb. 12 *Tuesday.* Visit to the oculist, Harley Street. A delightful waiting-room, modern style with no pictures, a mask over the fireplace, and highly decorative shelves containing choice bric-à-brac, some Chinese stuff, and a printed notice, " Please Do Not Touch." On the table another printed notice, " This Is My Dining-Room. Please Do Not Smoke." Thought to myself, this chap must be cantankerous. Impression not weakened when I said that if he read *The Sunday Times* he must know that J. stood for James, and he snapped out: " Never read it ! " I asked why, and he answered: " Because it's filled with fulsome and disgusting praise of that over-rated painter X—— ! " I wouldn't subscribe to this though I think Monty over-rates this artist. Anyhow one can't start arguing with oculists one doesn't know.

After this outburst he became thoroughly charming, and told me to drink more and smoke less. It appears that after forty-five the system absorbs more nicotine than it gets rid of, and that after a certain time the accumulated poison begins to affect the whole body.

At the optician's where I took the prescription for glasses to be made up, Shaw came in looking rather frail after his recent illness, with all the colour gone out of his face and his beard very white. He said cheerfully that he thought he had missed the psychological moment for dying, and I thought I had better not say he was like an actor who had missed not his entry but his exit. When he had gone, the young man who was measuring me for glasses said: " He's a nice old gentleman—never gives us any trouble ! "

Went with Jock to *The Dictator*, the Toeplitz film which cost £100,000 and is all clothes and furniture with no story. I get just as much pleasure in gazing at Harris's windows in New Oxford Street. When we got home Fred Leigh, who is looking after me while Arthur is ill, asked what we thought about the film, and was rather grumpy because we hadn't spotted him as the second royal footman at the Court of Denmark !

Arthur is still improving, though slowly. When Fred went to see him to-day, wearing one of my old ties, he said: " I shouldn't let the boss see you with that on, Fred. He's a memory twice as long as Datas, and an eye like a bloody hawk ! "

Feb. 13 *Wednesday.* Barbara Everest *excellent* as Queen Anne in *Viceroy Sarah* at the Whitehall last night. Report says she played Edith Evans off the stage when the piece was done at the Arts Theatre. Last night she certainly deposed Irene Vanbrugh, clever though that performance was of something outside her personality. The conclusion is surely that B. E. is a very fine actress, which anybody with eyes might have known any time these last twenty years. But no ! the foyer was convinced that it was the part.

Hamish Hamilton's bill for additional proof-corrections has come in. £65. Also £15 for presentation copies sent out by me. This makes £80, which was the profit left out of the original advance of £200 after allowing for all expenses, Charles's wages, etc. In other words *Ego* has been published, is hailed

Photo : Cooper

G. B. S. by Coia

as a great success and boomed as a best-seller, and the amount of money I have made out of it to date is EXACTLY NOTHING. What I want to know is how people live who live by writing books, since obviously if I hadn't my journalism I should starve. How do the limp-bearded, Sussex lot manage with their three novels every two years? Perhaps they do it all by hand, employ nobody and have no appetites to satisfy. Perhaps they don't go to Whitby, and anyhow the Downs cost nothing to look at. To be strictly accurate I am afraid some of the foregoing is just temper. It appears that, on a strict account, the book has earned £280, and as my total expenses, including Hamilton's account, come to £200, I have made a profit of £80 to date.

Received this letter:

I am getting many an odd hour's pleasure out of your *Ego*.

I appreciate especially that "not 'arf" war letter. It truly is a classic of its kind. Many a one like it passed under my eye at the front in the war, but sad to say I have forgotten them. One, however, strongly resembled the one you quote—disjointed and unpunctuated and all, and ending: "The guns are roaring with love from your son Wally."

I keep sacredly one I received myself and a typed copy of which I send you herewith.

Copy of soldier's letter.

France. *Pioneer C. H——,*
24th May, 1917. *B. E. F. France.*

DEAR SIR,

I am just writeing a few lines to see if it is possiable to get to know where my brother Driver A. H—— is berried if so will you pleace let me know as soon as possiable as I am only 17 years of age and our Alberts death as upset my Dad and Mother so they are claiming me back to home as I am the only lad left but I would give anything to see his grave first I shall always be glad to say he died a British soldiers death fighting for his King and his crounty to beat the Huns acording to the letter I had of him he was quite jolly and looking forward to going home but the King of

Kings as claim him to be one of his soldiers I will now conculd wishing your Brigade the best of Luck I remain
your obedience servent
(Signed) PIONEER C. H——.

Feb. 14 *Thursday.* The people in the basement moved this morning. This made me feel quite envious, for I adore moving. Removal men looked like Joe Gargery and Smike. Conversation with Smike:

ME. I suppose this is pretty hard work?
SMIKE. Yes. 'Specially when you've got toothache.
ME. Why don't you have it out?
SMIKE. 'Ad two out yesterday.
ME. With a local anæsthetic?
SMIKE. Yes. Lovely stuff. I could live on it.
ME. You mean die on it—you look half-dead now!
SMIKE. That's why my mates call me wot they do.
ME. What's that?
SMIKE. Unconscious!

Feb. 15 *Friday.* Dined with Filson Young at his little house in Campden Grove. Stayed till nearly three drinking the best part of a bottle of port on top of champagne, and smoked three cigars. Very good talk. Filson has now withdrawn into a world of Olympian indifference.

Feb. 16 *Saturday.* No ill effects from last night. Stanley Rubinstein sends me this play by his nephew, Hilary Harold Rubinstein, aged 8½:

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

by H. H. Rubinstein

Characters

ROBERT CATESBY (The head)
THOMAS WINTER
JOHN WRIGHT
CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT (John Wright's brother)
THOMAS PERCY
ROBERT KEYES
SIR EVERAD DIGBY (Conspirators)
AMBROSE ROOKEWOOD

FRANCIS TRESHAM
THOMAS BATES
GUY FAWKES

SOME SOLDIERS
THE EXECUTIONER
THE KING
A PRIEST

TIME. 9.30 *p.m.*
PLACE. *Maxstoke Castle. A dining-room.*

ACT I

SCENERY. *An old oak panelled dining-room with doors R. & L. and a table C. When the curtain rises, eleven men are seated round the table having dinner.*

SIR E. DIGBY. How are we going to get James off the throne?

R. CATESBY. Can any of you fellows suggest any method?

T. WINTER. Suppose we buy some poison and put it in some wine.

A. ROOKEWOOD. But how can we make James drink it?

R. CATESBY. I don't think this is a good idea, at all.

J. WRIGHT. Supposing we assassinated him when he is going to Parliament?

GUY FAWKES. Ah! that gives me an idea.

R. KEYES. What is it?

GUY FAWKES. Blow up Parliament, with gunpowder.

R. CATESBY. But where shall we put it?

GUY FAWKES. By hiring a cellar.

ALL. Ah! That's a good idea.

ACT II

PLACE. *A dark cellar.*

TIME. 11.55 *p.m.*

SCENERY. *A very black old cellar under one of the state rooms of Parliament. Next to the wall, there are faggots covering the barrels of gunpowder.*

When the curtain rises, the conspirators are sitting in a circle, talking quietly.

R. CATESBY. Are we all here? (*Looking round.*) Yes, I think so.

C. WRIGHT. Thank goodness.

R. CATESBY. Well, we are relying on you, Guy Fawkes.

GUY FAWKES. I'll do my best. I expect it will all go well.

T. WINTER. This is a very exciting night.

T. BATES. Yes, it is.

J. WRIGHT. I don't think anyone will let us down.

R. KEYES. I don't think anyone has heard us talking about the plot.

ALL (*omitting* G. FAWKES). Well, good-bye, Guy Fawkes, and good luck. (*They go out. A minute elapses without anything happening.*)

GUY FAWKES (*muttering*). Oh! Isn't it cold? (*Alarmed*) What's that? (*Some soldiers' voices are heard.*)

HEAD SOLDIER. Who does this cellar belong to?

GUY FAWKES. To Thomas Bates the wine merchant, and I am his apprentice. (*All the soldiers go out.*) Thank goodness! (*The soldiers come in again.*)

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS. We will have to search this cellar.

GUY FAWKES (*pleading*). Oh, please not. (*The soldiers find the faggots, and look underneath.*)

SOLDIER (*who is looking*). Look, here is some gunpowder under these faggots.

HEAD SOLDIER. Take this man away, with chains. He is the one who plotted against the King.

ALL OF THE SOLDIERS. Down with the plotters. (*He is taken away, and the curtain falls.*)

ACT III

PLACE. *At execution docks.*

TIME. 11.0 *a.m. November 12th. Seven days after the last scene.*

SCENERY. *A scaffold with the execution block on top. The executioner is standing by, talking to the King, James I. The crowds are beside the scaffold, talking excitedly.*

KING. Well, this is going to be the end of some great men.

EXECUTIONER. Yes, it is, and perhaps a good thing too. (*A herald's voice is heard.*)

HERALD'S VOICE (*off stage*). Ladies and gentlemen, we are now going to have the solemn execution of Robert Catesby, Guy Fawkes, Thomas Winter, Christopher and John Wright, brothers, and Thomas Bates, the men who plotted against the King. To-morrow also, Sir E. Digby, and the rest of the conspirators, are going to be executed. The only one that is not going to be executed is Francis Tresham.

KING. Ah ! at last ! ! They have been ten minutes late already. (*Enter Priest with conspirators, who are praying fervently.*)

R. CATESBY (*making his farewell speech*). Ladies and gentlemen, although I have to say good-bye, I still have tried to do my best for the Pope, although it did not work. (*Few of the crowd cheer.*)

GUY FAWKES. Ladies and gentlemen, I know that me and my friends will soon come to an unfortunate and unhappy end. Yet I will be quite pleased when I come from this sad place, but now I wish that I had not been so slow as not to light the gunpowder, for although I would have died, it would have been a happier death. (*Crowd cheer enthusiastically.*)

T. WINTER. Ladies and gentlemen, I am nearly sure that at least one of you feel gratitudeness in our favour.

J. WRIGHT. Ladies and gentlemen, I am nearly sure that some of us will go to Heaven, for we really are good, although it looks as if we don't show it.

C. WRIGHT. Ladies and gentlemen, if you really knew our cause, you would at least not make us die. Our cause is, that we believe in the Roman Catholic religion and try to make others believe in it too.

T. BATES. Ladies and gentlemen, we still look up to our head, Robert Catesby, although he is going to die, for he is a good man. (*Crowds cheer even more.*)

PRIEST. I think we all feel gratitudeness towards them, in spite of them doing WRONG. (*The priest goes to prayer.*)

KING (*angrily*). Don't fool about so, priest, for you are not much good. Get up, immediately !

EXECUTIONER (*unscrewing the axe*). It seems such a sad end. (*He blindfolds Robert Catesby, who puts his head on the block as the curtain falls. The curtain goes up again, to show everybody bowing gracefully.*)

THE END

Feb. 17 *Sunday.* *Ego* still in the best-seller list in *The Observer*. Went to Birmingham yesterday, *by train*. In the evening took Albert[1] to a music-hall where Harry Welchman sang "The Road is Open Again," a patriotic ditty based on the surplus in the Budget. *C'est gigantesque!* Albert's two jolly brothers motored from Hull to-day bringing with them a market gardener who wanted a horse for his lorry. Sold him Orchid for a song, and glad to see the last of her.

Feb. 18 *Monday.* At the Plaza this afternoon. Carole Lombard in a film called *Lady by Choice*. Carole is so blonde that when she goes for a ride on a white horse there is nothing to be seen except the animal's hoofs and the actress's lacquered nails.

Feb. 21 *Thursday.* Driving Leo to lunch to-day I said I was surprised to see that a well-known Bond Street money-lender who died recently left no more than £12,000. Leo puckered up his old face and said: "I expect that's what you owe him!"

Letter from Gladys Cooper returning Tait and Allott's *The Twisted Smile* and saying what everybody else says about the work of these boys. With this charming postscript: "This letter reads a little pompous! But I submit my opinion quite humbly." Whereupon I discharged this broadside, which ought to get them between wind and water:

14 *Doughty Street,*
W.C. 1.
21*st February*, 1935.

DEAR TAIT AND ALLOTT,

Last night I saw a play about a man bamboozling a bank. The night before, the play was about a man who lost his memory. Last week there were plays about life on a Devonshire farm and about Sarah Jennings. The week before, the theme was unemployment in Lancashire. Are you unable to perceive that none of these pieces is about artists or pseudo-artists squabbling in a London studio as

[1] This is Albert Throup, my invaluable stud-manager.

to whom they should seduce, or whether they can paint or play the piano?

I now enclose a letter from Gladys Cooper of which the significant sentence is: "I think that what the young authors want to get now is more incident and plot into their plays, because these plays are rather drawn-out, each act is a repetition of the last." This has also been the verdict of Raymond Massey, Adrianne Allen, Henry Oscar, Muriel Pratt, Auriol Lee, T. Bostock, A. D. Peters, and, I think, Mary Newcombe, Gertrude Lawrence, and Lynn Fontanne to whom you showed them. It is also entirely mine. If you are not prepared to accept our notion of what constitutes plot, I am afraid you must henceforth dree your own weirds—which sounds improper but Jock assures me is quite apt—because I cannot help you.

Let me give you this last tip. All writers who lack invention take an artist of some kind for their hero, and whenever I see a young writer's book or play about artistic people, I know at once that the author has no invention. Why not dig up some old newspapers for stories of crime and passion which might be wittily recast? I thought the other day of suggesting that you should re-write the *Hippolytus* as a modern comedy, but Jock pointed out that Sil-Vara has already done it in *Caprice*. Is there, then, nothing in any of the other Greek plays?

The whole point is that a witty comedy must have bottom as well as wit. That is to say it must be capable of holding an audience if the wit were removed. It is the old architectural business all over again; you must ornament your construction, and not seek to make your construction out of ornaments.

I expect by this that you are feeling pretty sick, and it is right that you should. So here is a touch of balm. A gentleman has written to say that the Newcastle Repertory Company will more or less put on any play I recommend. Their plays for the season include *Lear*, *The Cenci*, *A Month in the Country*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*—all of which, my dear boys, have a dissimilarity by which one can be told from the other!—and two pieces called *Reconciliation* and *Land's End*. Alas, his letter ends: "But no bedroom stuff"! And I shall have to persuade him that your studio is not a bedroom.

Do you want your play putting on at Newcastle? If you

do, I suggest that you let me arrange it from London, that I conceal the fact that you come from Newcastle—which in Newcastle eyes would damn it (" A prophet . . ." etc.) —and announce it as the work of London genius. If I were in your place, I should say Go ahead ! And I should let the man produce it as he liked and have nothing whatever to do with it till the first night when, in answer to thunderous cries of Author ! I myself will presumably appear and introduce the two ewe-lambs I shall be grasping firmly in either hand.

Yours ever,
JAMES AGATE.

Feb. 22 *Friday.* Went last night to *Stop Press*, Hassard Short's revue at the Adelphi. Not bad, and lovely lighting. There is a sketch in which Noel Coward is made to allude to me as " that avalanche of condescension."

Wire from total stranger offering to put on Tait and Allott's three plays at New Palace Pier Theatre, St. Leonards-on-Sea ! ! ! Did not pursue this.

Letter from a clergyman who says that during the last fourteen years he has adapted nearly all of Dickens's novels for the stage, and produced them with the help of amateurs : " Dickens lent himself unfortunately to an excess of sentimental nonsense combined with buffoonery, which suited people once but now makes them sick. Nevertheless the greatness of the writer is exemplified in this, that quite another kind of play can be made from any of his stories."

Lunched with Bertie van Thal. His brother Dennis van Thal, a personable youth of twenty-four, told me this unbelievable story, for which he vouches. Sick of advertising cameras he obtained an introduction to André Charlot at his office last August. He said, " Mr. Charlot, I want to conduct a revue." Charlot said, " Can you ? " The boy said, " I can," and Charlot said, " Prove it." Young van Thal then assembled an amateur band of 10 instruments—2 violins, 1 cello, 1 double bass, 1 pianist, 2 saxophones (doubling clarinets), 1 trumpet, 1 trombone, 1 drummer. He rehearsed the band, engaged a room at the Poland Rooms and invited Charlot to attend at ten o'clock one morning. Charlot came, and on the dot ! The

boy played part of the *Barber of Seville* Overture, two fox-trots, " and a thing called ' Nola.' " Charlot made an appointment for four o'clock the same afternoon and gave van Thal a contract to conduct *Hi-Diddle-Diddle*, which opened at the Prince's, Manchester, in London at the Comedy, and is now at the Savoy, where the boy still is. This is the first time, Stephen Haggard excepted, I have ever known an aspirant do anything except aspire, and the only time I have ever known a theatre manager act promptly.

Feb. 24 *Sunday.* Fulfilled my promise to speak at the O.U.D.S. Jubilee Dinner. In a fit of economy hired a car for the week-end costing only £2 10*s.*, with the result that an example of a much-advertised small make turned up; it looked like a louse and crawled like a beetle. George Mathew very rude about it, said he thought the make ought to be called the Festina Lente.

It took the piddling little car three-and-a-half hours to get from Birmingham to Oxford, with the result that we arrived in time for the second part of *Hamlet*. The theatre, which is re-built, and is now very large, commodious and in every way up to date, is not in my opinion nearly so well suited to these shows as was the old theatre, a huddled pig-sty entirely constructed out of inconveniences. The huddling had the effect of bringing the young men on the stage and the young men in the audience into close communion, so that the whole University seemed to be seconding the actors, who often badly needed it. Now everything is spacious and aloof, the community of thought and feeling is lost and, what is important, the young voices have not enough strength to fill the huge auditorium. I thought the costumes and music delightful and the acting weaker than in any O.U.D.S. production I have seen, except that the King, Mr. John Wentzel, spoke the soliloquy beginning, " O, my offence is rank " with an appreciation of the meaning seldom encountered on the professional stage, most exponents of that part not exhibiting the vaguest notion of what Claudius is talking about. Peter Glenville has one radiant smile and two beautiful legs, all three being

obviously inherited from his mother, Dorothy Ward, his acting being very nearly as boyish but not quite so principal.

It was after one o'clock before we sat down to supper at the Clarendon. I very quickly became involved in an argument with the producer, an Oxford don, about the character of Gertrude, who, he said, was a placid cow and nothing more. It has always seemed to me that Gertrude is one of the *optional* characters in Shakespeare. Sometimes she makes one think there is a good deal going on beneath the surface; at others she is just a fool. " More matter, with less art," and " The lady doth protest too much, methinks," have never struck me as coming from a fool. On the other hand, " Nay then, I'll set those to you that can speak " is not the utterance of a smouldering volcano. " As kill a king ! " is open to lots of interpretations. The *illusion* Shakespeare gives me of Gertrude's character insists that she was not privy to her husband's murder. If she had been, Claudius would have gone to her in his trouble, evinced in his abortive prayer, as Macbeth went to Lady Macbeth for comfort. But I feel that Gertrude had a very shrewd suspicion that something was up, and would not have been surprised at any moment to learn what that something was. On the other hand there are passages in which Gertrude just talks common Shakespearian form. For example, there's the famous passage about the " long purples." If Gertrude was a deceitful woman with her wits about her she would have kept off this subject; on the other hand, she would have had to be a fool indeed to go maundering off into ribaldry at such a moment. Isn't it likely, however, that it is not Gertrude talking, but just Shakespeare following the good Elizabethan fashion of relishing a dirty joke at any time and in any context ? This brings us back to the point on which Walkley was so very sound, the point that there is no character in Shakespeare apart from the words in which that character is defined: " If we want to understand the play of *Hamlet* we shall not do so by assuming that it is a piece of real life, lived by people who have independent lives outside it." This independent life of a character or " precedent *état d'âme*," as Walkley calls it, is a mere illusion

created by the dramatist from which flow all kinds of interpretative nonsense. Commentators who find Hamlet mad in one place and sane in another invariably attribute the inconsistency to Hamlet himself instead of to Shakespeare, who may have found it convenient to have Hamlet alternately mad and sane. Nothing is to be deduced from the fact that Gertrude may have been alternately cow-like and volcanic except that some lines given to her are placid and others eruptive.

But I couldn't get my Professor to see this, and in any case I should have had to convince him across the fair body of Miss Oriel Ross, who is much too beautiful to be interested in this kind of debate. Nor could I get him to see that even if Gertrude is the character he thought she was, he must not allow the actress who plays the part to suggest that placidity is her entire range, because then the audience has no more interest in the closet scene than if Hamlet were arguing with his mother's bolster. Darlington, in *The Daily Telegraph*, described the Queen as " rather inadequate." Ivor Brown, in *The Observer*, said that Gertrude " was pitched on a shrill monotone and never suggested a lady likely to stir fratricide for her possession." *The Sunday Times*' Own Correspondent said that " the actress's monotonous plaintiveness was apt to exaggerate the goose-like qualities of the Queen of Denmark." Such a consensus of opinion seems to me to be something which no amateur producer has the right to ignore; but the gentleman in question stuck to his guns, for which I respected him, and insisted that what he had sought for was a poetical rather than a theatrical interpretation of the play, for which I respected him less. *Hamlet* in the study may be no more than a poem; on the stage it must not be less than a play. I got so angry that when I was making my speech I was still thinking about this and was therefore, I think, a little below par. I told them about Fred Leigh seeing me off:

FRED. I've put in two shirts, two collars, two white ties, both dirty, and two waistcoats, one of which looks all right.

And you'll find the notes for your speech in your breast-pocket along o' your 'ankercher.

ME. But I haven't written any !

FRED. I found some old ones in a drawer and they'll do.

I also pretended that the entire Gielgud coterie had rung me up after the show, hoping the new " Hamlet " had not done too well. On the whole quite a good evening with two really witty speeches by John Sutro and a man called Felton. The latter told two lovely stories. An esoteric producer was heard to say to another: " The trouble with the girl is that she will get the line brown and I want it green." The same producer said to another young woman, " No, my dear, throw the weight on the left leg, not on the right. It's quite simple. Just a matter of foot-architectonics." Peter Glenville recalled how last year the O.U.D.S. went up to London and gave two performances—at the B.B.C., where the actors were heard and not seen, and at the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park, where they were seen and not heard.

By the way, Willie Armstrong, of the Liverpool Rep., promised to read Tait and Allott's *The Twisted Smile*, and produce it in the autumn if in his opinion the play has a certain amount of movement as well as wit. He does not boggle as much as other people at lack of plot, and altogether I think this is the best chance yet. Got to bed at half-past four. Started back about eleven. Exquisite day of bright, cold sunshine.

Lunched at Café Royal. Must now write an article, fortunately only a thousand words, which has to be in the post to-night, and then read all the week's books, after which what remains of Sunday evening is mine !

Feb. 25 Received this delicious letter from the author of *Monday*. the first letter given in *Ego*:

Feb. 24*th.* 35.

DEAR JIMMIE,

Thank you again and again for *Ego* which I could hardly put down for meals and sleeps.

Your body, I suppose, is bound to wear out, but surely

you should continue on the mental plane for ever. You are just as necessary to rid the world of cant, hypocrisy, and small meannesses as any Bishop is to show the way to Heaven by other means. In fact if you can't go on for ever I would have you borne up to Heaven thus: drawn by all your ponies turned Pegasuses—Talke Princess, First Edition, Black Tulip (who appears half off the ground already) and the rest—in a glass chariot, composed entirely of champagne bottles, you reclining in perfect ease in harmony with your digestion, your nerves and your creditors.

Good luck, dear Jimmie, to everything you put your hand or brains to.

Yours sincerely,
ETHEL.

Feb. 26 Letter to T. and A. posted last night: *Tuesday.*

25*th February*, 1935.

DEAR TAIT AND ALLOTT,

At the O.U.D.S. Jubilee Dinner I met William Armstrong and interested him in your play. If in his view that play has as much incident and is as witty as the current success called *Lover's Leap*—which it hasn't and isn't!—he will put it on in the early autumn, as his programme is now fixed up till June. This looks to me the best news we have had yet, as Willie is the kind of person whose performances are better than his promises.

Yours ever,
JAMES AGATE.

This crossed with a letter saying that of course the local Repertory Theatre objected to bedroom comedy: "They haven't a bed!"

The papers are getting filthier and sillier. Last week two young women jumped out of an aeroplane and we were invited next morning to gloat over the holes in the ground made by their bodies. Yesterday a porter at Waterloo found a parcel containing a man's legs severed at the knee. One of to-day's evening papers has a photograph of a detective carrying the parcel! This disgusts me. To-day was the court-martial and acquittal of Rear-Admiral Bailey in the matter of the collision between *Hood* and *Renown*. Tommy Driberg told me at the theatre that when he left the office they were

turning the place upside down for a photo of the Admiral's sick wife !

Letter from Edward :

Feb. 24/35.

Clapham Common, S.W. 4.

DEAR JIMMY,

Ego. May I advise one or two alterations in any reprint ? I should like to see some of the numerous bills of fare deleted. (They are perhaps the only bills you will ever have any chance of getting rid of !) The constant description of what you eat and drink together with the cost becomes boring. In any case it is uninteresting; and the phrase " a pint of Bollinger " so often repeated becomes unbearable. The mixture of Daisy Ashfordian naïvety and Anita Loosian sophistication is unpleasant in a full-grown writer. And let me implore you to cut out your bowels, your heart attacks, and your stomach.[1] Did Molière live for nothing ? Besides, even if true, such inventories read like advertisement-columns in the less stately Sunday papers. These are, after all, only little things and perhaps purely personal prejudices (how many more p's ?) about a book which is certainly alive and original. I'm not a younger Pliny or a Voltaire at letter-writing, but I'm going on, so——

Incompetence. Your favourite topic: *allons-y !* This I find to be the most virulent disease attacking all manifestations of human activity with which I am acquainted. The translation of musical texts is simply appalling. Beecham used to come to me in despair with operatic versions and say: " Mr. Agate, will you *please* make these singable ! " And these works had been published; and these works had been performed; and these translators had got the jobs ! One priceless bit I must quote. One of them in an old French song translates " Quand parrain vient sur son âne blanc "—" When god-pa calls in his motor-car ! " Incompatibility of musical and verbal accent: distortion or destruction of original vocal phrasing; the shirking of a scheme of rhyme laid down in the original language of the libretto; total disregard of what is vocal; snippets of phrases in choral parts without subject, object or verb; etc., etc. Rank incompetence !

[1] Have taken this tip and tried hard to keep these organs out of *Ego 2*.

Translation of Books. I find in a German novel that the hero goes to the sacrifice (*Opfer*) where the author says he went to the opera (*Oper*). This was published by a first-class English firm. What happens to a druggist who puts arsenic into a prescription "by mistake"? Two or three years ago an announcer at the B.B.C. said that Mme. Gerhardt would finish her recital by singing Brahms's "Blinde Kuh"—"Blind Cow." Quite correct literally, but unfortunately "blinde Kuh (spielen)" in German means "to play blind-man's buff," and the delightful song is all about that charming game.

Publishers. (With special reference to translated and untranslated works.) Here you will probably entirely disagree with me and tell me that publishers know their business better than I do and that I shouldn't presume to meddle. However I will bravely say what I think. First, they will publish the Memoirs of any kitchen slut who had the good luck to whore it with Louis XIV. But ask them to publish the Memoirs of La Rochefoucauld and they will laugh you out of their office. As regards their musical books they will publish lives of musicians by critics of very little if any real ability, yet entirely neglect works which Grove's *Dictionary of Music* tells them are "epoch-making," "the chief modern authority," or "the best critical biography." (Even Grove himself, the best musical dictionary we have in English, will devote an article to a song-writer on the level of Maude Valerie White or Frank Lambert, but ignore a French or German critic of the standing of Ernest Newman.) They will also publish a translation of the life of a brilliant French writer—a life which has been quite ordinary—but not the brilliant writings of the author himself.

As regards personal dealings with publishers, after laborious research in the British Museum (which, though it has taken many months and is by no means yet finished, I have enjoyed immensely and which has widened my knowledge considerably), I have been able to send to various London publishing-houses written lists of the finest books in French and German of the past ten or twenty years which have not yet been translated into English. The subjects are History, Memoirs, Biography, Philosophy, Religion, Music, Theatre, Novels (Art and Travel I have not yet explored). The publishers have been eighteen in number,

and each firm has had lists of books sent them of the kind in which they are in the habit of dealing. My authorities have been the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the Cambridge Histories, Larousse, Brockhaus, and various Histories of Literature, etc. Each book has been looked up in the Catalogues of the B.M. to see whether translated or not, and I have examined about three-quarters of the books themselves, to verify their excellence, etc. I don't think I could have been more thorough, although I may have been entirely on the wrong tack. Still, I thought the sending of such lists would be a better introduction and some reason for writing rather than simply asking for translation work. I have introduced myself, with qualifications, to each firm. Perhaps you can tell me if and where I have gone wrong, for *all* the lists have been returned unwanted. Some publishers were curt and snappy; others cold and supercilious; others just polite. The only one who took any real interest and discussed the works I mentioned was Hamish Hamilton. He promised by letter to read a very good biography of Catharine de' Medici by Mariéjol, which I recommended him, and promised me the job if he decided to take it on. Alas ! I heard no more from him. Spanish I have not tackled properly yet, although there is a whole literature in that quarter unknown to England. I have never dropped my Spanish, and my master told me when he saw me off by train from Barcelona—and wept, poor old dear !—that although I could not *speak* it fluently, I *knew* the language better than many Spaniards. Financially, my knowledge of Spanish has yielded me exactly ten-and-sixpence—for the translation of a stupid aria ! But I have never given it up, and I find that running over Spanish irregular verbs is an infallible cure for insomnia ! But it is all very discouraging. In 1934 I made exactly £49-1-10, less than the wage of an office boy. And 1934 won't come again and one doesn't grow younger.

Present Discontents. These are few, but acute. I am worried and terribly depressed because I have no work or signs of work. At the present hour, six p.m., and as it grows dark, I sit in my room in my overcoat, one pair of socks and one pair of gloves, and pretend I am warm, as there is no money for a fire. As there are no pennies for the gas-meter either, I make shift to read by a candle a German work on the Religions of the World ! (How like me !) I

have not decided whether the chapter on Mediæval Monasticism or on Buddhist Speculation more nearly befits my condition. I shall probably decide to-night, as I think it is going to snow. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisie, and envie, and all evil speakings—I shall be much pleased if you will stir your old stumps and find me some work. At fifty-five one wants the ordinary creature comforts, which borough councillors, haulage contractors, undertakers and other of the world's scavengers seem to enjoy without let or hindrance.

Ever yours,

EDWARD.

P.S. I came across a sentence the other day that will please you. It is the last in *Les Caractères* of La Bruyère and runs: "Si l'on ne goûte point ces 'Caractères,' je m'en étonne; et si on les goûte, je m'en étonne de même." What a good work! Jock shall decide for us whether it is as good as the "Characters" of Theophrastus written one thousand years earlier, and which La Bruyère translated.

I append here a list of Edward's translations:

OPERAS AND ORATORIOS

ALCINA	Handel
THE ITALIAN IN ALGIERS	Rossini
TALES OF HOFFMANN	Offenbach (Published; performed all over England)
HAMLET	Ambroise Thomas
A LIFE FOR THE TSAR	Glinka (Performed London and Manchester)
CARMEN	Bizet
MANON	Massenet (Performed about 25 times, London and Provinces)
L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE	Ravel
PRINCE IGOR	Borodin (Given all over England)
LE ROSSIGNOL	Stravinsky (Performed in London)
LE MARIAGE	Moussorgsky
THE FAIR OF SOROTCHINSI	Moussorgsky
BORIS GODOUNOV	Moussorgsky
THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES	Prokofiev

THE BARTERED BRIDE	Smetana
FRANCESCA DA RIMINI	Rachmaninoff
THE LESSON	Hindemith (Broadcast)
JUDITH	Honegger (Published)
AMPHION	Honegger (Published)
KING DAVID	Honegger (Published; broadcast 2 or 3 times)
ANTIGONE	Honegger
LES CRIS DU MONDE	Honegger (Published; broadcast)
LE COQ D'OR	Rimsky-Korsakov (Published; given all over England)
THE MAY NIGHT	Rimsky-Korsakov
SNOW MAIDEN	Rimsky-Korsakov (Given at Sadler's Wells and Old Vic. about 25 times; still in repertoire; published)
TSAR SALTAN	Rimsky-Korsakov (Given at above theatres about a dozen times)
THE TSAR'S BRIDE	Rimsky-Korsakov
KITESH	Rimsky-Korsakov (Broadcast 2 or 3 times)
KASCHTEI THE IMMORTAL	Rimsky-Korsakov
MOZART AND SALIERI	Rimsky-Korsakov
SADKO	Rimsky-Korsakov

BOOKS AND PLAYS

PRINCIPLES OF ORCHESTRATION	Rimsky-Korsakov (Published (Édition de Musique Russe, Paris)
MANUAL OF HARMONY	Rimsky-Korsakov
MERCADET LE FAISEUR (adaptation)	Balzac
GILLES UND JEANNE (GILLES DE RAIS) (adapted)	Georg Kaiser

The picture of a man with such a record shivering in an overcoat over an empty grate is pure Balzac. The way Edward preserves his scorn of everything short of the first-rate is after Balzac's heart. His pride is fantastic.

You would not guess from the following modest letter that

the writer was going to star in the title-rôle. He should be exquisite as the sprite from another world.

Sloane Avenue Mansions,
S.W.3.
February, 23rd.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

I would rather confess to you myself, than let you hear from someone else, that I am going to do a film. I am afraid this is in a way disobeying orders, but I am at the same time doing what you advised me, namely saying " I must have so much down for the picture, and that's that ! " At first I thought films were only good for making money but I have changed my mind and am very keen that this should be a good one. It is to be about the life of Mozart and we are making it at Vienna and Salzburg, with the Festspiel Orchestra and all sorts of excitements, through the summer. So I hope it has every chance of being good and I shall have some time to work up for it.

May I ask your forgiveness for this ?

Yours very sincerely,
STEPHEN HAGGARD.

Have people *no* sense of humour ? A lady writes to invite me to a performance of Racine's *Andromaque* by amateurs of the London University. The last time I saw this play was at the Trocadéro in Paris at a matinée in August, some thirty years ago with Bartet and Paul Mounet. Heavens, how hot it was, and how bored I became. Nothing below Rachel and Sarah for me in this stuff, thank you !

Feb. 27 Wednesday. Visited hospital. Arthur much better and will be out in a week's time when he has agreed to go away to Bournemouth or Torquay with his mother. Am insisting on this.

Nothing else for to-day except that in the theatre last night I sat next to a woman whose fur coat overflowed into my stall and who, in the big scene, took out a make-up box, cleaned her face and smeared her mouth. The reason I stipulate for end seats is that I can keep an empty one between me and these revolting imbeciles. As there is nobody on my other side I enjoy comparative isolation.

Feb. 28 *Thursday.* Now comes this good letter about nerves which may help other sufferers from this distressing if imbecile variety. It is from a lady living in one of the remotest and healthiest parts of England!

> Thank you for writing *Ego*. To read that you frequently suffer from a fear of doing the thing you least want to do was an enormous relief, as it had never occurred to me that any other sane person suffered from my own private "madness" which I am much too "inhibited," as the jargon goes, ever to have told anyone. The fears also are parallel. When my small son was a baby I used to be really terrified that I would go mad in the Grand Guignol style of *The Old Women* and blind him with knitting needles, and I also share your fear of walking in my sleep out of a window, and have incredible struggles to open the tops of hotel windows that have only been opened at the bottom since they were made. I need hardly say I have never been known to sleep-walk. This is not written with a desire to discuss nervous symptoms. For all I know it may be a common obsession, but it was such a relief to find in your book that I was not unique. I thought it might possibly have a cheering effect on you too. I have every appearance of being quite sane and lead a most bucolic existence with a very pleasant doctor husband (but doctors don't like anything abnormal in the home—hence the inhibitions!), a clutch of young children, dogs, garden, and all the usual country accessories. You, by the way, are, all unknown to yourself, a most familiar character in this rural scene, and over the Sunday joint it is frequently said, "James (forgive the liberty) is in very good form to-day," or "James was a bit bleak about the Cochran show," and so forth. It is pleasant to find from the sketch at the beginning of *Ego* that you look just like you write and sound.

Also a delightful letter from Frank Whitworth, a Cambridge undergrad who once had the temerity to publish some of my dramatic criticism at his own expense, and who is now a fully fledged barrister. He tells me that success is "just round the corner, though it would need the outlook of an Einstein to convince me that the immediate space in front of me is curved," and complains that *Ego* is issued

" at the price and in the style usually reserved for lives of Emma, Lady Hamilton."

Lunched with Harry Preston at the Embassy. These places make me feel like some eighteenth-century hack summoned to dine at his patron's and almost of less account than the liveried footman. I have to be witty to live; the Embassy crowd can live without being witty. And do ! Harry told me that the Cambridge crew spent last week-end with him. At the Monday luncheon given to them Harry, a former amateur heavy-weight boxing champion, and the crew of nine drank eleven magnums of Bollinger 1928. The crew then left, said Harry, " with the smile of sweet schoolboy equanimity on their lips." After which he and the ex-champion had another bottle for luck. This stuff is really very good, and we had two bottles for lunch, after which I returned to the flat and wrote an exceedingly sober article though Jock had to keep reminding me what paper it was for ! *Henry IV* in the evening with George Robey as Falstaff. I propose to take some trouble about my *S.T.* article on this. Took Hugh Walpole, Tommy Driberg and George Mathew to supper at the Savoy. Hugh has lost all his pomposity and is now a sinful mortal like the rest of us, which makes him much better fun. Bed at 3.30.

March 2 *Saturday.* Started getting up at half-past ten. What with exercises, massage, bath, reading letters and papers, answering 'phone and having a new idea about my Robey article which I had to put on paper and get nice, uncomplaining Eiluned Lewis to take down over the 'phone—with all these interruptions I finished dressing at a quarter to two exactly. My mother used to tell us boys how our father would sometimes put on one sock and then take twenty minutes before putting on the next. I perfectly understand now that he was working out his plan of campaign for the day. In my case the ideas are too urgent not to be dealt with at once, and it might be worth while trying to get up, or being made to get up, *before* I am allowed to see my letters. Must suggest this to Fred.

Coming back from a very sober lunch, in a taxi passing

Holborn Restaurant at 3.45 exactly, for one whole minute I felt perfectly well. Well—as I used to feel when playing cricket in the garden at home. No obsessions, or tricks, or worries, but a kind of clean palate of health. It was wonderful.

Later played bridge at the Savage, or was proposing to when, some bright ideas accruing about the Falstaff article, I rushed over to the *S.T.* and got them inserted. Had a snack at Scott's in the middle of which had the notion of calling Robey's Falstaff " the Bing Boy in the broad way of English history." So got up from the table and went to the telephone which still stands in an angle of the stairs, so that waiters cannon into you and anybody going up or downstairs can hear what you say. This may be fascinatingly archaic, but give me *le confort moderne* ! Couldn't get through, however, so had to ring up Eiluned Lewis later from Peters' where I was again playing bridge. I have no doubt that to-morrow morning the article will read like a model of spontaneous lucidity.

March 4 Monday. After a week-end of solemn thought, a decision and a re-decision, an orgy of boat-burning, and a frenzy of re-building boats, I now come to the conclusion of the whole matter *in re* Robey's daring to play Falstaff in *Henry IV:* Part One. Regretfully but finally I must believe that Sydney Carroll's casting must be, in the nature of things and arguing from first principles, impermissible. It is all very well to say that the clowns in Shakespearian plays were played by buffoons like Tarleton who spent half their time dancing round performing bears, and that therefore they should be played by to-day's music-hall comedians. There is muddled thinking of two kinds here. First, Falstaff is not a clown in the sense that Dogberry is. Second, the parallel would only hold if it were the custom to give the comic parts in a modern tragedy to music-hall artists. What exactly happened at His Majesty's Theatre ? Robey came on to the stage rightly determined to be as much Falstaff as possible and as little the familiar George. But he is only human like the rest of us; he just could not resist evoking old laughter in such a line as: " What doth gravity out of his bed at midnight ? " in the

third word of which he broadened the vowel as, on his wonted stage, he broadens it in his stories of Nottingha-am and of the Man who Ba-anks at Co-ox's. This, of course, proved irresistible, and the audience did not resist it. But it was also purely naughty. Again there were occasions when the harking back to the vaudeville mood was involuntary, in the sense that Robey had recourse to it to cover up the gaps when he was waiting for his words. Actually he knew his lines; they were in his mind, but slow in tumbling out of it. Illusion in the theatre is like a wall of nursery bricks which, built up block by block, can be demolished at a blow. Even if George's lapse in each kind, voluntary and enforced, was only five per cent of the whole performance—and on the first night it was perhaps rather more—the resulting ten per cent was enough to ruin it as a performance of Shakespeare's Falstaff.

Yet without lapses of any sort I cannot believe that the thing was feasible. Ivor Brown has said that however skilfully Charlie Chaplin were to play Hamlet, we should still be conscious of the moustache, the cane, and the boots. If Nellie Wallace were as good an actress as, say, Kitty Clive, she could not, at this time of day and because of her other glory, be accepted as Maria in *Twelfth Night*; one would all the time be conscious of that stringy boa and wilting hat. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and though Robey does heroically I can no more believe in his Falstaff than I would believe in Dean Inge's Yorick. He is without the depth of philosophy to cope, for example, with the reflection upon the ragged army, and is unable to speak the lines: " Tut, tut, good enough to toss, food for powder, food for powder, they'll fill a pit as well as better: tush man, mortal men, mortal men." There is doom here, and a sense of the sadness of things, and he who speaks of it is the Falstaff who would not have Doll Tearsheet remind him of his end. Take again the scene in which Falstaff pretending to change places with the Prince asks if he remembers a virtuous man of noble carriage—both a's lengthened if you please !—and then has the words: " And now I remember me, his name is Falstaff. If that man should be lewdly given, he deceiveth me." When this is Shakespeare

the lewdness is merely Elizabethan; in Robey's mouth the words suffer a sea, or rather music-hall change into something rich and strange; wondrously rich, as goes without saying, but strangely alien to Shakespeare. It is unfair to ask him to do anything with those passages in which the knight speaks like the knight he has been, where he tends to discourse *nobilmente*, as musicians say: all that aspect which Elgar stresses in his Symphonic Study. Robey's study has been desperate, not symphonic; if he spoke the lines about mortality —and I doubt if he did—then they certainly went for nothing.

People will doubtless flock to see the experiment and many will like it. Sydney is not to be blamed for his freakish casting of the principal part; I don't see how otherwise this play should be expected to attract. Apart from Falstaff it has always seemed to me on the dull side. Does anybody really care about those Plantagenet wars which contrived to be pettifogging, civil, internecine, and guerilla at the same time? Part One always seems to me enormously inferior to Part Two. Hotspur is always singled out for admiration though to me his tirades are something tedious, and I very much prefer his counterpart in the sequel which is Pistol. Has any commentator ever pointed out that Shakespeare probably invented Pistol to keep the noise going, and because he could not have that sail which had bellied so eloquently in Part One to flap against the mast in Part Two? And then again perhaps I prefer Pistol to Hotspur because he is "louder and funnier."

March 5 Tuesday. Luncheon at the Savoy of the Grand Committee for the Marie Tempest matinée. Everybody there, including J. M. Barrie who in accents drugged with mawkishness made reference to Mary's toes. An unhappy variant of the *Kiss for Cinderella* mood. Mary cried and somebody wondering whether the tears were real I said "Of course they're real; everybody knows she can cry off the stage." And I told them the story of how Willie Browne came down to breakfast one Sunday morning to find Mary in floods of tears and screaming: "James Agate says I can't cry, and damn it,

he's right ! " She looked lovely to-day and in a hat of white kid, chic as that worn by Donatello's David. Sat next to Athene Seyler who reported Lilian Braithwaite as saying about some actress who has had too many failures recently: " Of course she's a good actress. (Pause) But somehow she seems to have lost the knack ! " Athene says that Lilian is the most literally minded woman living. She says exactly what she thinks, and this in an insincere world passes for, and is, wit.

March 8 *Friday.* Arthur out of hospital and goes to Bournemouth on Monday.

Hell of a fuss about the Epstein statue of Christ. At the Savage Club Bernard Lawson bravely withstood a storm of stupid criticism about it. They asked who would be so cruel as to suffer little children to come unto this Christ ? And I said: Certainly not Gothic or Hellenistic-minded little children; but no Mexican baby would be alarmed, and there is no obligation on Epstein to limit his statues to the artistic taste of what Pinero used to call " our little parish of St. James's."

Am playing with the idea of a new car. Taxis cost more.

Letter from a film magnate—not Korda—asking me to lunch. Brutally refused, implying he had got out of my *Tatler* articles all the assistance I am prepared to give gratis, and if he wants any more he must give me a seat on his silly board, and at £2,000 a year. Which wouldn't be at all silly !

March 9 *Saturday.* The coldest day I remember, owing to an anti-cyclone in the Baltic. Why, by the way, is the mischief always caused by an *anti*-cyclone ? Are there no cyclones, and don't they matter ? Wearing my thickest vest, a woolly, a heavy suit and my leather-lined motor-coat with the fur collar, and walking from Gow's to the club, I was almost cut in two by the bitter wind. In the evening, when the temperature had dropped still lower, I saw fifteen or twenty women huddled up on camp-stools outside the Vaudeville Theatre for a play called *Summer's Lease* !

March 11 *Monday.* Once again I find myself alone in my opinion, and it doesn't worry me in the slightest. Every film critic in London has given enormous praise to W. C. Fields's impersonation of Mr. Micawber in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film of *David Copperfield.* It is my unshakable opinion that this is the only blot on a film which is very fine so far as it goes. (" Are tears the dewdrops of the heart ? " Can that be even a reasonable presentation of this book which omits not only Miss Mills but the waiter who was content to lose on the ink, the breeder of Suffolk punches, Mr. Creakle, Mr. Mell, Mrs. Crupp, Miss Mowcher, Mr. Spenlow, Mr. Henry Spiker, Hamlet's Aunt, Mrs. Steerforth, Rosa Dartle, Traddles and the elder Miss Larkins ?)

I have long had a great admiration for Fields as a buffoon, but I do not feel that he is or ever can be Mr. Micawber. Chesterton has said: " There is a peculiar quality as of celestial pre-existence about the Dickens characters. Not only did they exist before we heard of them, they existed also before Dickens heard of them." Now one of the things which were ordained before ever Time or Chaos was is the gentility of Mr. Micawber. Not so much gentility itself as gentility's aura. He is silent about his family, whereas Mrs. Micawber is eloquent about hers, and from this deductions may possibly be drawn. But this does not alter the fact that Mr. Micawber's fundamental and initial trait is his air of breeding. Consider the facts. He wore an imposing shirt-collar in which he was in the habit of settling his chin; Fields wears a collar which no more imposes than does Grock's, he never settles his chin in it, it is an incongruous piece of furniture, and we feel that it would not be there but that the character may not be portrayed without it. " Mr. Micawber," said Mr. Quinion, " is known to Mr. Murdstone "; Fields's Micawber would not be allowed within a mile of that august personage. Mr. Micawber was a monument of condescension; Fields would not patronise a fly, though he would breathe on it in a beery way. Mr. Micawber's house in Windsor Terrace " was shabby like himself but also, like himself, made all the show it could "; Fields makes no show, for he has no atom

of personal vanity and we wonder what the absurd clothes are all about. Young David received the impression that Mr. Micawber had been an officer in the Marines; Fields suggests a retired bo'sun. David washed his hands and face " to do the greater honour to his (Mr. Micawber's) gentility." Fields's Micawber would have washed his hands and face to do honour to Master Copperfield's gentility. Mr. Micawber carried his gentility with him to the debtors' prison: " There was a club in the prison, in which Mr. Micawber, as a gentleman, was a great authority." When next he turned up it was " with his eyeglass, and his walking-stick, and his shirt-collar, and his genteel air, and the condescending roll in his voice, all complete ! " In the middle of his denunciation of Heep we read of his " genteelly adjusting his chin in his cravat." And when we finally take leave of him as he sets out for Australia in " a complete suit of oilskin, and a straw-hat with a very low crown, pitched or caulked on the outside," he still maintains " the old genteel air," folds his arms in a resolute manner, and " stands as if he were then stationed on the figure-head."

I do not mind so much that Fields is short whereas Mr. Micawber was tall. Or that Fields has a mop of hair whereas Mr. Micawber was so completely bald as to have the notion that Nature had fitted him to be a Judge and even, stimulated by the partiality of Mrs. Micawber, " saw himself, in his judicial mind's eye, on the Woolsack." What I mind very much is the lack of education in the actor's voice, and in place of that condescending roll the rich encrusted accents of the music-hall. Mr. Micawber had a little Latin and a little less Greek; Fields has nothing but gags. Mr. Micawber was both voluble and volatile; Fields has to grope for his words, and has, possibly in consequence, a continuous air of being slightly at a loss, like Robey with his Shakespeare. In a famous passage Mrs. Micawber expressed the conviction that Mr. Micawber's manners peculiarly qualified him for the Banking business. My still firmer conviction is that Fields's manners peculiarly disqualify him from playing Mr. Micawber. In this film he gives a magnificent impersonation not of Dickens's

character but of Ally Sloper, whose bulbous nose and washy eye he reproduces to perfection.

March 13 *Wednesday.* Geoffrey Whitworth has written to invite me to join the General Committee of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre. I sent back a very loud and positive NO, but said that I was perfectly willing to be on the Executive Committee. General Committees are a mere pretext for getting nothing done. The bigger and more representative the Committee, the less likelihood is there of anything happening. In my view, London doesn't desire or feel the need for a National Theatre, for if it insisted on having one in the way in which it has insisted on the stadiums at Wembley, Highbury, and Stamford Bridge, it would have one. Besides, the existing Committee with its £150,000 has quite enough money to run a theatre. What it wants the remaining £350,000 for is the building. This is crazy. Having got a white elephant is no reason for building a rose-pink marble stable to house it in. If the Committee doesn't want to hire or buy an existing theatre—and some beautiful theatres are to be had—it should, in my opinion, give the money to the Old Vic. If it cannot do this by law, then let it move Parliament to alter that law. Even altruism has its time limit, and to say that the £150,000 cannot be handed over to the Old Vic. and must await a National Theatre proper, is like endowing pigs with aviation costumes against the time when they are going to fly. I am satisfied that the Old Vic. can supply London with all the Shakespeare it has ever wanted or is going to want, and obviously the extra £150,000 would enable that admirably managed theatre to compete in the market for acting talent.

March 14 *Thursday.* *Frolic Wind*, adapted by Richard Pryce from Richard Oke's novel, is a lovely piece of work. Not quite a play, perhaps, but a series of scenes of exquisite quality. Shall go all out for this on Sunday. Rather a nuisance that the part of the young man is played by an actor called Sir Basil Something, I forget what. A nuisance because he acts like a gentleman, whereas most of

our juvenile leads are nondescripts with a fake Oxford accent imposed on a genuine Brixton one, or else pushing young particles who have left the glove counter to better themselves. I shall say that this fellow behaves like a gent, but all the same I could wish he hadn't a handle to his name.

March 15 *Friday.* Those miracles of sensitiveness, the dramatic critics, are faulting last night's play because it is "Meredithean." I have not seen a single allusion to its superb quality, whereas all of them, except Morgan's second string on *The Times* whose name I can never remember—a decent, cultivated bloke—have made great play with Lady Athalia's dirty pictures. I sent Jock to-night and he reports a silly, sniggering audience which seemed uninterested except when Fabia Drake, changing her frock, showed her undies, and the young man and young woman prepared to strip for their moonlight bathe. It is perfectly true that a country gets exactly the theatre it deserves. At the club I was comparing this play with Keith Winter's *Ringmaster*, also produced this week, and in my view a fourth-rate piece in every particular with hardly a line in it that an imaginative dressmaker might not have written. Every word a counter of theatrical speech worn smooth, with childish efforts to shock as when a young man says to a supposed lady: "What a bloody-minded woman you are!" and she replies: "You're pretty bloody, too." Ray Massey defended Winter's piece as against the other on the ground that it will make more money. He also dismissed Priestley as a playwright "because he writes about bank-clerks and I can see better ones at my bank any day!" Yet Massey has played *Hamlet* and should know all about plays that "please not the multitude." Had already written a column and a quarter putting the Keith Winter play in its place and showing why it is bad. Tore this up and have written a column and a half about *Frolic Wind*. "'Tis better to fight for the good than rail at the ill," as my Lord Tennyson remarks. Am telling the highbrows who thought *Cavalcade* was vulgar that it's up to them to see that this little play has a fiftieth part of *Cavalcade's*

Photo: Kouch

Ego in 1935

run. I have no patience with Civil Servants who bemoan popular successes and when something first-class is put on just flap their hands and stay at home. Of course if somebody put on *Frolic Wind* at Covent Garden, cut out the words and had it danced to one of Willie Walton's symphonies in front of one of Allan Walton's curtains hung upside down, it would be the success of the season.

March 16 *Saturday.* As Arthur is at Bournemouth, hired a Humber and went to Birmingham, Fred Leigh's boy driving. Diamond puts us all in a quandary. If he is allowed to poke his nose he goes off his hocks quite sensationally; if he is forced to bridle he just won't use them at all. Albert is all for the correct carriage, but I am insisting on the hock action. Give me the star performer who knocks the house sideways, even if he or she has a vulgarity or two, in preference to the player who does nothing wrong and leaves you cold. I wouldn't cross the street to see an actor who was merely correct, and it's the same with this pony. But Albert is a great artist, and perhaps he will end by pleasing us both whether Diamond likes it or not.

March 17 *Sunday.* Bought a bright bay pony with four white feet who looks like making a fine mover. Shall call him " Ego."

The White Devil at New Phoenix Society. A wee bit dull. Turned up the notice I wrote of this play when it was done in 1925 by the now defunct Phoenix Society. Very much interested to find that whenever I was moved to-night it was by the same passage that moved me ten years ago. Either the play's merit is constant or my taste hasn't changed. The Brachiano was Wilfrid Walter, who put up a virile death-scene. This was quite different from Esmé Percy who, if I remember right, died in a night-shirt of white satin and very much " after " Sarah's Marguerite Gautier.

March 18 *Monday.* Four extraordinary things happened this week-end:

1. Germany is to have a conscript army of 500,000 men which means that the Versailles Treaty is " off." But that

wise old bird, Clemenceau, knew that it was never really " on." I repeat, if in the last war France had been Germany and Germany France, the beaten country would not have been able to lift a finger, let alone its head, for a hundred years. *We shall know after the next war how Germany would have arranged this.*

2. The 30 mile-an-hour Speed Limit in built-up areas came into force.

3. The new Bridge Rules were published.

4. *Ringmaster* is off, and *Frolic Wind* continues.

Of these four occurrences number four is far and away the most remarkable.

March 19 *Tuesday.* My two godsons, Paul Dehn and Tony Baerlein, who had never met, blew in this morning simultaneously, causing me to cry out with Macduff: " What, *both* my pretty chickens at one fell swoop ! "

Lunched at the Ivy with Harold Dearden who was wearing a lavender suit and blue hunting stock and looking his beetling best. Hamish Hamilton and Jock made up the party. Hamilton brought with him an absurd German toy or box for testing the amount of animal magnetism in people. You rub a kind of celluloid surface and odd little figures rise and jump about according to the degree they are moved. Jock got no results, I very few, Hamilton fair and Dearden immense. Told them of two amusing things, though the second annoyed me at the time. Last night at the Savage Club I said to Jimmy Pryde: " Well, James, are you ready to lead our armies against Germany ? " He looked up from his Scotch broth and said: " I expect so. What time is it ? " The other thing was about last Sunday night in the same restaurant when a man who was dining opposite came over to me and said: " My name is Bliss, and I think I've met you at the Critics' Circle. Is your name Agate ? " I said " Yes " and he said: " I hate seeing a face I can't put a name to ! " As I could find nothing to say to this except something about Bliss being ignorance, which would have been rude, I held my tongue and the gentleman resumed his seat.

Delightful letter from Willie Armstrong, who however

turns down T. and A.'s play. The way he puts it should be of value to these hurt boys:

The Playhouse,
Liverpool.
March 16th, 1935.

MY DEAR JAMES,

I am so sorry not to have written sooner and still more sorry that, after most careful consideration and two other people reading this play, I fear I cannot hold out any hope of its production here. In all sincerity, I enjoyed reading every word of it—for it is a hundred times better than most of the plays submitted to me. The young men really can write dialogue with an uncanny skill and their people are good types and with a sense of humour. My only criticism is that they talk too much, especially in the second act, which is almost a sequence of dialogues—and one longs for something to happen. The play to my thinking begins a little too flippantly but quickly improves and the dialogue really achieves a standard which is quite remarkable. I don't know what you think about the ending. It is quite as it should be artistically but I fear it might damp the ardour of an audience. It is just a sad, disillusioned fade-out—in fact, a twisted smile—but very good from artistic standpoints.

You told me that the reason the play had not been done in London was possibly on account of its lack of "guts." Well, I fear that this applies much more to the provincial audience who want something significant and with a "bite" in it. I have found here that plays of talk, apart from broad comedies, leave our audiences quite cold. And I fear that this would be the effect with *The Twisted Smile*—good though it is in its sophisticated way.

If we were a smallish theatre doing a play a week I might risk this play—but here where our running expenses alone amount to over five hundred pounds a week, and each play gets a run of three weeks, we couldn't risk it. Again our audiences are curiously apathetic about a play they know nothing about—they want established successes, or if it is a new play it must be a Priestley or a Neil Grant or authors whom they know. Sad, but there it is.

Dear James, nothing would have made me happier than to help these two young men for they have the stuff of the dramatist in them, and I know how disappointed they are

that their work has not had the recognition it deserves—and this makes my refusal even more difficult for I hate not helping young authors when I can. But I think you will understand how I am placed.

Surely this play could get a London chance? Would not the Arts Theatre people give it a hearing? A London performance would encourage them—it is unthinkable that they should be tempted to chuck writing. Do think kindly of me, please.

Affectionate wishes,
WILLIE.

Exeunt, I fear, poor Tait and Allott. I shall always think there was something in them.

March 20 *Wednesday.* Owing to representations made on this side Mr. Jack Warner has decided to delete the part of Mrs. Bottom, the shrewish spouse specially written into the script of the new talkie to be made from *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Bully Bottom is to be played by James Cagney, presumably because he specialises in bullies!

March 21 *Thursday.* Douglas Furber told me this good story. A hawker stopped our meanest music-hall magnate and implored him to buy bootlaces, pleading that he was starving and throughout the week had only taken one and threepence. The magnate said: "How does that compare with your takings for the same week last year?"

March 23 *Saturday.* Farewell dinner at the Club last night to Benno Moiseiwitsch and Mark Hambourg who are off to the Americas, Mark going north and Benno south. A verse of poetry which would fit Benno's playing, with one word altered, is:

Waking, or asleep,
Thou of *life* must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

For Mark one would have to go to Dryden:

> What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
> When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
> His listening brethren stood around,
> And, wondering, on their faces fell
> To worship that celestial sound:
> Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
> Within the hollow of that shell
> That spoke so sweetly and so well.
> What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

Came down to Brighton to-day with George Mathew. Howling gale. After lunch sat in a pier pavilion listening to a " Magyar Band " of five instruments tackle Wagner, Sullivan, etc., and reading Swinnerton's *The Georgian Literary Scene*. How unequal he is ! What does he mean by saying of Coward that " his plays are denied wit by the critics " ? Then what sort of a description is it of Clive Bell to say that " he is very pale, and his hair has been rather tawny " ? The point about C. B.'s hair is that it doesn't begin till somewhere near the crown, as though Mrs. Partington had swept it off his forehead with a mop. And how can any man who knows the modern world and its phraseology, allow himself to end his essay on Max: " The question arises whether Max Beerbohm is a man or a fairy." Yet how good he is on Lytton Strachey ! " He shrank a little from the multitude and splendour of the Elizabethan age, which he found inexplicable by any rules learnt at Cambridge. The combination of savagery and poetry, sweetness and lust, had little enough of the refined humdrum of Strachey's own life, and yet, since its living works could not be gainsaid, it was beyond reach of the shuddering hand with which he drew a curtain between himself and current vulgarity. Of whatever happens in the every-day houses of modern England he knew, and wished to know, nothing at all." This is first-class.

By the way I was very cross with Robert Gathorne-Hardy in last week's *D.E.* for withholding in the account of his early years the story of how, at one of his grandmother's tea-parties, Frances Hodgson Burnett discussed literature with Henry James. This morning I received this postcard:

21.3.35.

Since you allow me one supremacy in my work *Coronation Baby*, namely the most maddening paragraph in literature, I think you deserve the Hodgson-Burnett–H. James anecdote, such as it is. Mrs. H. B. gave a tea-party in an orchard, and all the guests, including H. J., had to sit on cushions, except my grandmother, who demanded and got a chair. Mrs. H. B. asked H. J. what place was best for literary composition saying that she chose an orchard such as they were in, with the inspiration of the birds and flowers etc. Henry James, sitting on a cushion, said he preferred a chair and a table.

Wasn't this better untold? No doubt you imagined something far better—as I intended.

ROBERT GATHORNE-HARDY.

March 24 *Sunday.* Lovely spring day. Spent perfect morning on the pier listening to that Magyar orchestra playing my favourite selection from *The Gondoliers*, reflecting that my article in *The Sunday Times* on Priestley's *Cornelius* is longer if not better than Ivor Brown's article in *The Observer*, and reading a witty, Victorian pastiche by an anonymous author whom I suspect to be Rose Macaulay. The audience at the beginning of the concert numbered eleven which presently dwindled to four—for every man hath business and desire. Enquiring the name of one of the pieces from the leader George somehow or other managed to convey to him that I was Ernest Newman. The poor chap came up to me later and expressed so great a sense of honour and gratification that I had not the heart to undeceive him! Watched a man fishing. He caught a tiny crab, and threw it back saying it had a life like the rest of us. I thought of asking whether this didn't apply to fish also, but it was too near lunch-time to start a metaphysical argument.

March 25 *Monday.* Russell Thorndike told us at the Savage to-night how as a boy he met Irving. Thorndike was a chorister at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, becoming head of the Decani and Queen Victoria's last solo boy; indeed he sang a Spohr solo at the funeral service at St. George's. After the service Sir Walter Parratt asked him

if there was anyone among the Kings and Queens present whom he would like to meet. Thorndike pointed to Irving. Parratt, being very friendly with Irving, at once made the introduction.

I give Irving's words as nearly as possible as Russell repeated them. " You are a star to-day, my boy, and I am very glad to have supported you. I hear you want to be an actor. If you ever do, remember this: be very sparing with your make-up. Use only as much as is absolutely necessary. God and the devil have written lines on your face that will help you to show the good qualities that are in you as well as the bad. Don't cover them up. Do you understand? " Little Thorndike, feeling that it would be becoming in him not to understand so great a man too readily, replied: " I'm afraid I don't, sir! " Whereupon Irving resumed: " Well, my boy, there are only two ways of portraying a character on the stage. Either you can try to turn yourself into that person—which is impossible—or, and this is the way to act, you can take that person and turn him into yourself. That is how I do it! "

In the process of recollecting his choir-boy days Russell related an incident that occurred when he was a private serving at Gallipoli. He and four other men were in charge of a machine-gun, with orders to hold their ground at any price. During the fighting a man covered with blood and filth stumbled into the shell-hole. Taking him for a Turk or German —for the Turks were led by German officers—Russell and the others pounced upon him. He shouted that he wasn't fighting and turned out to be not only an English officer but head of the Cantoris at St. George's when Thorndike was head of the Decani. This led them to trying to recall the words of anthems, and before long they were lustily singing Bach's St. Matthew Passion.

Presently the order came to fire, and the British officer said: " Do you realise that those voices may belong to Germans who sang the Matthew Passion with us at Windsor when foreign choristers used to be invited? Are we going to shoot *them*? " Russell, seeing the point, replied: " Well, we

could point the gun upwards ! " and apparently did so. He remembers vividly the look that came over the British officer's face when he realised suddenly that the Germans also were pointing their gun upwards !

Russell said he thought this a good illustration of the futility of shooting men in front of you whom you like and have no quarrel with, when it would be much more satisfying to shoot the sergeant who is bullying you from behind and whom you don't like anyhow !

March 26 *Tuesday.* Called on Monty last night to take him to *Henry IV*, Part Two. Found Tommy Earp there and asked him why he didn't finish, or even begin, that Life of Henri Beyle he has had on the stocks some twelve or fifteen years. Tommy sleepily replied: " If ever I do produce it, I rely on you, James, to pronounce it a ' succès de Stendhal ' ! "

The performance at the Old Vic. was just not good enough, partly because a semi-stylised setting won't do. The tavern must look like a tavern, warm and cosy, and Shallow's orchard must be full of afternoon sunlight. Actually they looked like a barrack-room and a recreation yard. Maurice Evans contented himself with Silence, and made him wear a hat with a tall crown like a witch. This so tickled the Old Vic. audience that it shrieked with laughter throughout the whole of the scene with Shallow, and the business of " And is old Double dead ? " lost all its pathos. Morland Graham made a lovely Shallow, but the evening was ruined before he came on. Merritt was a small Falstaff—which is a contradiction in terms—and Alan Webb's Prince was like Falstaff's description of Shallow as a young man. Sofaer, as the King, spoke beautifully. Owing to a misunderstanding with Jock about work and trying to write 1,500 words for the *D.E.* under the hour I was in a state of complete nerves throughout the evening and my supper at the Savoy consisted of one large whisky and soda, an orange and a cigar. Slept like a top !

April 1 *Monday.* National celebrations like public holidays are a curse to the journalist, who has to deliver his copy a week earlier, and sometimes finds two weeks

crowded into one. Here is my little lot for the next six days.

Monday	Book article	1,600 words
Tuesday	Causerie	1,500 „
Wednesday	Film article	1,200 „
Thursday	Pseudonymous article	1,500 „
„	*ditto* Jubilee article	2,000 „
Friday	Theatre article	2,000 „
		9,800

Fortunately there is only one play this week. But I have still to tackle the films and the books and these include Cronin's recent dollop of 701 pages! Blast these talkative writers who don't know when to stop!

Kid Berg beaten on points by Gustave Humery in the 10 round rubber match at the Albert Hall. C. B. gave me a seat in his box. The Frenchman mopped up the first 6 rounds and though Berg made a grand fight of it to the end he could not recover the lost ground. Reginald Purbrick asked us all to supper at the Dorchester. We sat right up against the stage, and the cabaret girls had a hard time trying to vamp a hard-boiled table consisting of C. B., Alan Herbert, Seymour Hicks and may I say myself?

April 2 *Tuesday.* Bought a new car—Humber 12. Very pretty colour, almond with green wings. Chose this shade so as to be able to spot it in car parks and after theatre. Arthur and I have parted company. One has no right to stand in a man's way however much one likes him. Have taken on a new man. Single, or so he tells me. But then, I have reason never to believe in the celibacy of chauffeurs. Very small, but so is the car.

April 3 *Wednesday.* Letter from Dorothy Cheston saying A.B. thought quite a lot of me really but that our temperaments were violently opposed. "If you had had mumps in the jaw, he'd have had them in the foot."

First night of *The Old Ladies*, the play made by Rodney

Ackland out of Hugh's novel. A huge success and very fine acting by Mary Jerrold, Jean Cadell, and Edith Evans. Not more than a pin between any of them. Heard a good story. It appears that at the first rehearsal Hugh went up to Edith and said: " I hope you like the novel." Edith is said to have looked him full in the face and blurted out: " Oh ! Is it from a book ? " Lilian Braithwaite would have said this if she knew the novel by heart. Was given supper at the Savoy by a charming old lady, a Mrs. Jefferson, who is as keen on a good hunter as Agatha Payne was on Miss Beringer's piece of amber. Believes there is nothing in the world worth living for except hunting. And at seventy, too ! Martita Hunt, George Howe and a great-grandson of Coventry Patmore were the other guests.

April 4 *Thursday.* Here is Morgan's notice in *The Times* of *The Old Ladies*. I think it is the best bit of dramatic criticism since Montague. When Charles is in his best form he has us all whacked. *The Times* is happy to have a critic who is, when not insisting that sow's ears shall be silk purses, indisputably first-rate:

> The lodgings of the three old ladies are in a draughty, dilapidated house in Polchester. By virtue of Motley's extremely skilful design the bleak little hall, the rickety staircase, and the three bed-sitting-rooms all lie open to view. Each room describes its inhabitant. In the foreground, on the level of the hall, is the cheerful neatness of Mrs. Amorest, a pink-cheeked widow with the gentle self-assurance of an easy conscience and a courageous, simple mind. In the curve of the staircase is the pale, indeterminate gentility of Miss Beringer, a timid creature whom life has starved and who responds to Mrs. Amorest's neighbourly kindness not with warmth, for no warmth is left in her, but with an agitated, chattering gratitude at which a part of the audience laughed until even they perceived the icy tragedy of it. And on the first floor, at the back, is a room dripping with highly coloured shawls and fringes in the midst of which, telling the cards of her gypsy ancestors, Mrs. Payne sits in her rocking chair, a sprawling woman like a fierce and raddled toad.

Mrs. Amorest invites the others to a little party on Christmas Eve. Out of her poverty she has bought them presents and on the table has set up a tiny, glittering Christmas tree. Miss Beringer is delighted, and Miss Jean Cadell, brilliantly discovering a schoolgirl's excitement in this old hunted woman, chatters and giggles and hesitates until one's heart would break. Miss Mary Jerrold, the hostess, calm and plump and wistful, is meanwhile drawing a portrait less spectacular, but in its nature more endearing and in its restraints as subtle. And down the stairs, supporting on the banisters her monstrous weight, comes Mrs. Payne. Mrs. Amorest, not being afflicted by nervous imagination, treats her with the tolerant affection that she lavishes on all the world, but poor Miss Beringer is with reason terrified. Mrs. Payne says little or nothing. Colour and glitter arouse in her a silencing lust. Her black, sodden eyes glare at the Christmas tree; her head becomes fixed, her bloated body seems to swell and loosen, her hands are flaccidly covetous. When at last the party is over and, on her way upstairs, she is shown the piece of carved and glowing amber that is Miss Beringer's dearest possession, her longing is directed towards it and her implacable cruelty towards its owner. The story of the play has still to be told —how Mrs. Payne won the amber by a process of mental torture that drove Miss Beringer to collapse and death—but, in a sense, it is all told when Miss Edith Evans first sees the object of her desire. Her back is towards us; she is powerless to act with her face; but the wrench of that gross body, the horrible greed of the uplifted arm and hand are enough. The theme of menace and suffering is stated; what follows is a poignant elaboration of it. That the play is comfortable, no one need pretend; its life's blood is cruelty and terror, and they are not comfortable things; but its life is abundant, its impact continuous, and its performances, orchestrated by Mr. Gielgud, collectively flawless. And Miss Evans's own performance is something more. It is creative and cumulative—a slow nightmare of *macabre* genius. The body, the eyes, the hands are terrible enough, but the mouth wears the very shape and colour of the mind's disease. The whole figure, in its stained and mountainous velvets, is like some insane doll that increases continuously in physical stature and spiritual decay.

Amusing contretemps to-night. José Levy's wife being ill in a nursing home I sent Bert, the new chauffeur, out with three parcels—flowers for Molly Levy, some photographs for May at the Haymarket, and a shirt and collar to Harman's as patterns. He left the shirt and collar at José's house, the flowers at the theatre and the photographs at Harman's! Getting wind of this I told him to rectify matters, whisk the flowers away from May under promise of some more to-morrow, and deliver to poor Molly who might possibly, being ill, be offended. But May's dresser refused to *lâcher prise*, saying the poor lamb got too few flowers to take any risk. Meanwhile José had gone over to the nursing home carrying my parcel as though it was diamonds. Exactly like a Labiche farce! Over the 'phone at midnight José told me the mistake, and the laugh she got out of it did Molly more good than any amount of flowers could have done.

April 5 Friday. Jock arrived in a state of excitement about Beecham's performance last night of Verdi's Requiem Mass with the Philharmonic Society. He was dithyrambing about distant trumpets echoing the brass of the orchestra in the "Dies Iræ," when I shut him up: he ought to know by this time that I don't discuss Requiem Masses on April or any other mornings.

J. A. I've never heard a Requiem and don't want to!

Jock. This isn't a funeral service, goofy! It's a kind of big oratorio. It's Miltonic. It's Michael-Angelesque!

J. A. It sounds Papist to me!

Jock. Don't be so like Lady Bracknell! Verdi's concerned with the Last Trump and the Last Judgment which don't seem to me Papist, Baptist, Methodist, or Mahomeddan. They're just Final!

J. A. Well, anyway, it's all about death, and I'm a person of energy and not rest, and I don't want music about graves and the hereafter.

Jock. Oh! Well, I hope you'll have the energy to get up out of your grave! And you might begin by getting out of your bed.

I got up, and the day's work began something morosely. Spirits improved, however, as the morning wore on. Did not really start work until one o'clock. Broke off at two-thirty for lunch and resumed about four. By nine o'clock had written 2,000 words on *The Old Ladies*—I think up to my best form—and 1,200 words on *Sanders of the River*, the very amusing film of Edgar Wallace's story. In this naked savages, when among themselves in the jungle, talk perfect English, and *impis* foregather in *praus*—the words have stuck in my mind since I was a boy—to sing lyrics by Arthur Wimperis to the music of a gentleman called Spolianski. It was exactly as though somebody had planked a Drury Lane musical comedy in the heart of darkness. Jock said I ought to call my article *Lightest Africa*, and I did.

April 6 *Saturday.* Have moved the establishment to Southend for a day or two. It is like coming home ! I let young Winsor give me a half at golf to-day, and he won easily.

April 7 *Sunday.* Halved with Winsor, same odds.

April 8 *Monday.* Lost by 3 and 2, same odds.

April 10 *Wednesday.* Returned to London and dined last night with Monty, who wants me to put up for the Garrick. Do not think I should have a dog's chance.

Letter from Charles Morgan saying:

> It's odd that you should have liked this notice of mine for I spent Sunday morning in fierce dispute with you on the subjects of death and poetry and old age. De Senectute and the younger Tennyson ! To me death is one of the three supreme ecstasies, together with love and poetry—but I won't trouble you with that theme now. There will be trouble enough, I fear, when you find it in the novel that I have been writing for the last three years.

Now I really can't let people tell me *at nine in the morning* that death is an ecstasy ! So I sat up on my old hunkers and

reeled off this reply, unwashed and unshaved, sans teeth and sans breakfast.

14, *Doughty Street, W.C.*1.
April 10*th*, 1935.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Do you remember Mr. Curdle? And can you not hear him saying to Nicholas Nickleby: " The Ecstasies, sir, are a completeness—a kind of a universal dovetailedness—a sort of a general oneness, if I may be allowed to use so strong an expression, so far as I have been enabled to bestow attention upon them "?

You tell me that for you death is one of the three supreme Ecstasies, together with love and poetry. Will you tell me, please, of what kind is your ecstasy, and of what duration? Obviously the physical part of dying is not an ecstatic business in the sense in which ecstasy is a state of enjoyment; you can, therefore, only mean the spiritual aspect of the business. Is this (1) the ecstasy of surrender, as when you submit to an anæsthetic? Is it (2) in the nature of high diving, Rupert Brooke's " as swimmers into cleanness leaping "? Or is it (3) just the great gamble, terrifically trusting the larger hope, and so on?

Now surely (1) and (2) are bound up with (3). You only take laughing gas because you think coming out of it is going to be a laughing matter. Would you put so much zest into your high dive if you thought there was no water in the bath? Surely it all depends on what comes after? Of course, you may have a notion that there is some kind of personal future for the individual spirit. This would obviously be the greatest of your three ecstasies because it would mean the continuance of the other two. But suppose the future consists in merely being drawn back into whatever force there is? Rupert Brooke called this " a pulse in the eternal mind, no less," and I've always thought that this should read: " A pulse in the eternal mind, no more! " For I cannot see that this post-mortem state in any way differs from the pre-natal one, and you are not going to ask me to get excited about that! When Johnson was told that Hume expressed himself as no more uneasy to think that he should *not be* after this life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist, he replied: " Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed; he is mad; if he does not think so, he lies."

Either a state of death is not-being, or it is something different from not-being. If you can get ecstatic over not-being, then indeed your perceptions are disturbed; and if death is not not-being, then from my point of view it is just another form of life and I don't know what we are arguing about!

Will you now answer me two questions? Are you looking forward to a final ecstasy because you think the future holds something to be ecstatic about? Or is it just ecstasy, absolute and unconditioned, and in this case do you just go about exclaiming "Ecstasy!" in the way Humpty-Dumpty went about saying: "Impenetrability—that's what I say!" It will be just like you to make the ecstasy in your new novel a dual business of twin souls being ecstatic together, knowing ultimate fusion and so forth. But even you should see that lovers must have a dimension in which to fuse, and that the existence of any dimension negatives what is normally meant by death.

Then there is the question of the time limit. You, Charles, on your own showing think you are going to have a hell of a fine time on your death-bed. But how long is that going to last? Please explain to me how much fun Hannibal is getting at this moment out of being dead?

What is wrong with you poetic fellows is that you use words too loosely. Ecstasy in the case of a murderer might mean three separate things—cessation of mental agony in this life, exaltation at the notion of putting his head in the noose, anticipation of a renewed spirit in some next world. The same applies to the non-murderer. Keats murdered nothing but sense by telling us that he was half in love with easeful death, the kind of death being defined later as ceasing upon the midnight with no pain. Surely to be in love with or ecstatic about just ceasing is pure poetic folly?

Another thing about you poets is that you will ride two horses at once, asking the reader to take for philosophic thought something which is merely poetic expression. When you talk of the ecstasy of death, it is your duty every time you use the word "death" to pin yourself and the reader down to the particular kind of death your sentence refers to. "The deadest deaths are best," said Montaigne, obviously conceiving all shades of death from annihilation to an infinitely richer and fuller form of life than we have experienced here. Which of these many states is your

ecstasy concerned with? If your novel doesn't explain with algebraic and geometrical clearness what you are ecstatic about, I shall dismiss it as an exquisite piece of highbrow and poetic guff!

Yours ever,
JAMES.

April 11 *Thursday.* Took Monty last night to the new revue at the Vaudeville. Not bad. Long discussion over dinner about Morgan's ecstasy theory. Decided we should agree with Charles if he said that death was one of the great themes for an artist. Here, of course, there is ecstasy in all degrees beginning with "A late lark twitters from the quiet skies" and rising to the splendour of "I am dying, Egypt, dying." But I feel that the ecstasy is the creative artist's and not his subject's. I just don't believe that anybody ever wanted to be "gathered to the quiet west" unless he couldn't stick pain any longer. The death of a hero and his ecstasy in it, is always a *pis aller*; he embraces it not for its own sake but lest worse befall. Reverted to the subject to-night with Ivor Brown who said: "Ecstasy my elbow! Either you are hit on the head and don't know anything about it or you rot to pieces. You can't consider death as an entirely spiritual business. The physical just won't be eliminated."

Première of the film called *Royal Cavalcade*. Excellent and pleasantly weepy in a score of places for a score of reasons. Lunch at Grosvenor House, and told John Maxwell and the company present that his film was almost as loyal as if it had been made in America. This tickled 'em mightily, and got me another bottle of champagne.

Bad revival of *Justice*—first item in a Galsworthy festival nobody really wants, though a lot of people pretend otherwise. A listless, apathetic audience and some dreadful acting. This is Lion's third revival of *Justice* in seven years, and the poor thing is nearly dead of it.

April 12 *Friday.* Exquisite lunch with Hamish Hamilton to-day in his flat at Eyre Court. Foie gras, salmon that was young and pink and tender instead of the usual stone-coloured stuff that crumbles like an oatmeal biscuit,

an excellent loin of lamb, Lanson and brandy. Good talk by Scott-Gatty and Dearden. But must give up these middle-day parties. Snoozed till 6.50 and then wrote a bilious article for the *S.T.* on modern acting.

April 13 *Saturday.* An absurd and irritating day, the absurdity consisting in my allowing myself to be irritated. A hundred and one things to do before I can get away on what I insist on calling my Easter holiday. This means that between now and next Saturday I have to write 1 *Express* article, 1 leader page article for the *D.E.*, 1 preface for a book of Cape's, 1 *Tatler* article, and 1 *S.T.* article about any general subject, there being no new plays, and to attend and speak at a dinner in Birmingham. Just as I was getting ready to start Eiluned Lewis got through on the 'phone. She was nervous about this week's stuff in which I say that you couldn't cast Henry Arthur Jones's *The Liars* to-day because the nearest the modern actress can get to a lady is the mannequin. Eiluned was quite justified in getting hot and bothered; the article *is* a bit of a snorter. No time for breakfast, and round about two at the Savage bolted some tough boiled mutton and raw turnips while one of our chattier members recounted at greater length and complexity than any Variations Brahms ever wrote how he met Marie Dressler on William Hearst's ranch in California. Called at *S.T.* and got my article through *as I wrote it!* 4.45 and light not too good. Joggled down to Thorpe Bay where Winsor was waiting on the tee. Held back by couple in front, an annoying matron with, and proud of, a son who, Winsor tells me, has only been playing a fortnight. If they would let us through we could get past the four-ball match in front, charming old walruses who naturally don't see the fun of giving way to Female and Offspring. We take an hour to play 6 holes, by which time I am 4 down. Finally Female waves us on, but by this time the game is ruined and we take $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours to complete a round we normally do in $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours. Winsor becomes dormy 5, but I take him to the seventeenth green. Am ridiculously disturbed at being unable to hold my own at a half. Time was when I

would back myself at these odds against any pro in England, on any course. And to think that now I cannot hold my own with the assistant on a potty little mud-heap like Thorpe Bay. As Marie Lloyd used to sing: " I can't forget the days when I was young ! " Carminati, the head-waiter here, brought balm to me at dinner, and Irvine, the wine-waiter and second in command, solace. They are the most understanding, considerate and kindly pair I have ever met. That brute, Fred Leigh, just laughed at me, and said I ought to be thankful that golf matches are decided on points. Like most Colossuses he is the gentlest of souls, and at any hint of illness or low spirits comes lumbering up with the solicitude of a mother-elephant.

April 14 *Sunday.* Went to bed last night at 10.30, utterly whacked, and very nearly slept the clock round. Composed costume suitable for gent on fine Sunday at Southend in April. Light blue shirt and collar, same colour stockings, violet and maroon tie, sporting small check jacket and waistcoat, Harris tweed plus fours large check, soft light brown felt hat, old brown shoes, nondescript handkerchief and monocle. Opening exchanges at breakfast:

ME. Morning, Fred. How do you like the *tout ensemble* ?

F. L. Too much toot, James, and not enough of the other thing !

Idled about after breakfast and then motored to Creeksea and lazed about the silly little shore. Drank a bottle of Bass which, in the open air, made one half-tight. Passing the Anne Boleyn Fred trolled a merry stave: " Here a sheer hulk lies poor Anne Boleyn." Good lunch, no kickshaws but a solid tuck-in of hot roast beef. Slept for an hour. Woke up and read the whole of *Autobiography of a Rascal.* Excellent. Golf-course at 5 o'clock. Raining, so sat in car reading *Hung for a Song,* an Aubrey Beardsleyish tale of 18th-century pirates, scented gigolos from Barbados and a fragrant little nigger called Saint Ivory. The sky clearing I went out and defeated Winsor (2 up), the last 10 holes in a downpour. My iron play

very fine ! Drove to Westcliff. Whisky. Returned to hotel and reviewed the *Autobiography*. Cold supper at 10 o'clock, over which I finished *Hung for a Song*. Bad title but entrancing little book. Reviewed it and entered up this diary. It is 1 o'clock and I am still fairly fresh after a longish day.

April 15 *Monday.* Motored to Birmingham where I was the guest of honour at the Shakespeare dinner of the Central Literary Society. The Lord Mayor intimated at the beginning of the proceedings that he couldn't stay late. But did that shorten the early speeches ? No ! The loquacious fellow who proposed the toast of The Immortal Memory took 37 minutes over it ! Just when my turn came the Lord Mayor said he was sorry it was past his bedtime and left, taking the Lady Mayoress with him. I was so angry that I made a magnificent speech out of pure pique. There had been a boxing jamboree in the town and the hotel was full of notabilities of the ring, including Jimmy Wilde, now a tiny, stoutish, baldish figure to whom the aura of greatness still clings. When young, Jimmy looked old beyond his years; now he is old he has reverted to babyhood. To me he is a figure of glory never to be dimmed. We had some pleasant talk, for his modesty is boundless as his fame. He has accepted back-numberhood with philosophy.

April 16 *Tuesday.* Not so Edgar Baerlein, with whom I dined to-night and am staying. He finds laurels uneasy resting. But then Edgar's children are not helpful. They have no reverence for yesterday, which for them happened before the Flood. Richard steeplechases, Tony's world is bounded by the film, and Elizabeth is a silent mouse. Di has enormously improved and no longer varnishes her nails. Only in three bosoms does Edgar's great day still live—his wife's, his daughter Diana's, and mine. Yet he can be intensely irritating. He complained of the excess of golf in *Ego* and attacked the famous four-ball eclectic score recorded in that book. This happened in, I think, 1932 at Thorpe Bay. There were four of us: Denny and his assistant and another amateur and myself. I grant that it was in the height of summer and

the ground hard, which means that the two 500 yard holes could be reckoned as par 4's, because a phenomenal hitter could get up in 2 shots. The lowest number of strokes, therefore, in which the fourteen two-shot holes and the four one-shotters could be reached was 32. And one putt on each green and the minimum score that was humanly possible, bar flukes, was 50. The par for a single player with the normal allowance of 2 putts would be 68, incidentally the competition record by Abe Mitchell. Actually the best-ball score of the four of us was 55. Edgar said that this was unremarkable. Owing to the fact that such a method of reckoning was outside the scope of the game there could be no figures because nobody had ever troubled to record them. As for the thing being a record, he thought the odds against such a score were not more than 1,000 to 1. In his view scores of 50 had happened before and, if any note had been kept, he would expect to find that on some occasion all the greens had been reached in the minimum number, one of the four players had got down in 1 putt on each green, and somebody had holed either a tee or an approach shot. But Edgar is, or was, himself an unbelievable marvel, witness his winning the open tennis championship at the age of fifty-one against a professional ten years younger, from the score against him of 2 sets to 1, 5 games to 1, 40-15. I have played tennis, golf and bridge with him and never really enjoyed it, for the reason that we have contrary notions of what constitutes a game. My idea has always been to play for fun; Edgar's passion is the ice-cold demonstration of superiority.

April 17 *Wednesday.* Back at Southend.

April 19 *Good Friday.* Letter from Charles Morgan:

April 14*th*, 1935.

MY DEAR JAMES,

Thank you for a very good letter—but it's the hell of a letter to answer; I've been trying to answer it, in the book, for over three years—and here is the last hour of Sunday

morning! But at the risk of being crude, I'll try to be precise and answer your direct questions.

" *Of what kind is ' my Ecstasy ' ?* " I don't mean ecstasy in the sense of pleasure or, even, happiness. The word means " out of, or beyond sensuous perceptions." I *do* ask you to be " excited about the pre-natal state "—my idea being that there is a real and continuous life from which sensuous experience in the body is a divagation. We are shut up in a house; we came from the outside air and shall return to it. Whether the condition after death is pleasant or unpleasant isn't the point; whether it is a personal survival or an absorption " in the eternal mind " I don't know—possibly it is both; but I think I know it is more real and, in a profound sense, more natural and less divided against itself than our present experience. If you ask me for algebraic proof, of course I have none, but there is presumptive evidence in the lives of the saints and the mystic poets and, if you will accept it as evidence, in my own experience. The interesting facts are that in love and poetry one is aware of an extraordinary transcendence of oneself—of self-loss; from which one agonizingly falls back. Secondly, that the complete mystical experience appears always to be describing the *same* transcendence. Thirdly, that the emergence from one life to another by the route of death is continually repeated in Nature and in the principal beliefs and symbols of a thousand religions that differ in all else. The thing seems to have the authority, not of algebra, but of necessity.

" *Am I looking forward to a final ecstasy because I think the future holds something to be ecstatic about ?* " Again with the reservation that ecstasy is not a synonym for happiness —yes . . . My book, you will be relieved to hear, has nothing to do with the fusion of twin souls. The woman is alive when the book ends. The man is one who, having had a partial mystical experience early in his life, struggles for its fulfilment—in love unsuccessfully, in poetry less unsuccessfully, in death perhaps successfully. Please believe that I'm no more didactic than you. I am telling a story and asking questions.

Time limit. " *How much fun is Hannibal getting at this moment out of being dead ?* " Except in " the house," there isn't any time. That is our particular unreality. Hannibal has just died and will always have just died . . . I don't

expect " a hell of a fine time on my death-bed "—more probably agony. But since you quote Montaigne, wasn't it he who said in the Essay on Cruelty something to the effect that, though he didn't envy the dying, he envied the dead? I believe that where at root we differ is that you do not willingly distinguish between the physical act of dying and the state of death. I have no particular love for the act of dying; it may or may not be pleasant, according to circumstances; but all my understanding leads me to believe that the state of death is, in fact, vital and real; that even in life some of us sometimes have direct apprehension of it; and that two of the occasions of these imperfect apprehensions are poetry and love—precisely because they also lead a man " beyond sensuous perception."

I know that this letter is a scrappy note on a vast subject. Anybody with your wit can pick it to pieces and ridicule it. I suppose if I were cautious I shouldn't send it. But there seems to me just a chance that, though you and I pretend to be miles apart, our philosophies are less opposed than our outward showing would suggest. You have a great capacity for enjoyment of many things; I envy you that; but I refuse to believe that you are complacent about experience here or feel it to be complete. To me life is exciting because it is incomplete. We are born inside a house—often very pleasant and well-lit by artificial light—and we live inside the house all the time. There are windows, but the lamps and candles inside are so near and powerful that everything outside the windows looks black. If by some means we can put out the candles—i.e. die, even for a moment, to sensuous perception—all the night outside becomes brilliantly visible. Love and poetry are two of the possible means. But still, there we are, always inside the house. Death puts out the candles and opens the windows—that is the idea I am driving at. And as you won't deny that there are stars because I have no astronomy, so you won't deny that there is an ecstatic condition, called " death," because Vaughan and Traherne and Crashaw and Emily Brontë have all tried and failed to describe it. The point is that they were under necessity to *try* to describe it because they knew well enough that there was something to describe and knew that it was of transcendent importance. It isn't fair to fasten on Keats; his

" ceasing upon the midnight " etc. was personal despair—not metaphysical doctrine. Personally I don't believe in " just ceasing." If I thought it was as simple as that I should have killed myself long ago—on the various occasions, not infrequent, in which life has seemed to take more than she gives.

Yours ever,

CHARLES MORGAN.

My answer:

14, *Doughty Street,*
*W.C.*1.
19*th April*, 1935.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Yes, I do indeed agree that our philosophies are less opposed than our outward showing would suggest. In fact, I cannot, dear Mr. Morgan, conceal from you any longer—as they used to say in the Victorian novels—that I have long been intellectually in love with you, though sometimes I find the mistress a trifle on the austere side, like the young women in Meredith.

More seriously, I am very grateful for your letter which is the first instance I have met of what I should like to call rational mysticism. I have no use for the mysticism which is mere self-hypnotism, the state in which a man holds a thing to be true because he would like it to be. I am so tired of people who because their æsthetic senses are pleased by the flow of vestments and the smell of incense believe in the infallibility of the Pope, of those who because they like the cut of a surplice or the stained glass in York Minster hold the Immaculate Conception to have been true in fact.

But your mysticism is, if you will allow me to say so, good enough in its own right for me not to want to put it to any algebraic or alien test. One does not measure triangles by their colour. As far as I am concerned, your case would have utterly failed had you not boldly said: " I *do* ask you to be excited about the pre-natal state." That was crucial, and when I put the question I had no idea that it was so very near the heart of your mystery. Now the thing holds together, as far as I am concerned, for my intellect lets me believe in a continuum open at both ends but not in one which starts with birth, like the starting gate in a horse-race, and then goes on for ever.

Nevertheless, my intellectual honesty forces me to test your algebra when you yourself use it, which you do in

one place and one only. This is when you adduce in support the common principle of a thousand differing religions. Logically, I think there is nothing in this. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*—you know the old tag. All religions are one shield against the fear of death, and the belief in " the emergence from one life to another, by the route of death " is in my view no more than a common defence against the idea of annihilation. This is the only place in which you abandon mystical logic for the material sort. But I am not going to worry you with a long letter and will simply say that you have enabled me for the first time in my life to conceive, or rather go a millionth part of the way towards a conception that the state of death may not be the same thing as nothingness.

I am to tell you, Charles, that this letter of yours must not be lost, since it is more than just a letter to me. This means that you are to let me include it in my next book, which will not be for another two years and therefore long after your novel. You will acquit me of any idea of improperly enriching my book. I have no doubt I could write to, say Chesterton, and draw him on the same subject. But in some ways I am oddly honest. The thing doesn't happen that way. And in this case you will remember that you began it ! Or perhaps I began it a bit before by writing to *The Times* about your article which started the whole thing. You will now understand why, on the whole, I would rather you didn't answer this, as we should both be getting print-conscious and that would never do ! So please take this letter as an expression of admiration lone and unconditioned, as Montague once said about something.

Yours ever,

JAMES AGATE.

P.S. This reply has been a little delayed owing to my being on holiday. Jock didn't forward your letter for the reason that it was " only a matter of Life and Death " !

April 20 *Saturday.* Is there anything more heartbreaking than to imperil a match by missing yard putts ? Yes, and it is to miss a few more and lose a game you won from the tee. Since I came down here a fortnight ago I have not been able to get near the hole. However, the second of

two new putters worked wonders and against Winsor this afternoon I holed 'em from all over the place.

Later attended the opening of the band-stand season. My idea of this is a hot night with not a breath stirring, *l'heure bleue*, and the smoke from one's cigar climbing lazily into the darkling vault. To-night it was wet and cold with a small, Arctic breeze forcing one into the garishly lit shelters, and not too warm in spite of a thick overcoat. The band was the Royal Marines and they blew and blared like Kipling's " giddy harumfrodites." We arrived in time for a trombone solo followed by a selection from the *Yeomen of the Guard*, quite entrancingly played. But then Sullivan, even when badly done, takes me into another world and gives me that boundless release of heart and spirit that Montague talks about. Some days ago I asked Bert, the new chauffeur, if he liked music. He said yes and that his favourite piece was called " Hungarian Rhapsody." He had heard it in a cinema, played on ten grand pianos. It sounded grand, he said. They played it to-night, and it sounded less grand. Wrote an article to-day for the *D.E.* on the decay of manners in the last twenty-five years. After slanging the young folk in the matter of inessentials, I praise them for what really matters. Example, the young woman who has just flown the shark-infested Sea of Timor.

April 22 *Monday.* Discovered howling misprint in yesterday's *S.T.* owing, doubtless, to Eiluned going home for Easter. She looks fluffy and excitable and rather like some bird which has drunk too much at our Charles's *Fountain*. *Au fond* she is as competent as granite. I have invented the legend that whenever she leaves the office the paper promptly goes to pot. On the same principle, if ever she marries, the *S.T.* will have to be discontinued ! Thank Heaven she remains wedded to my muse, or rather to the correction of its literals.

April 23 *Tuesday.* Very good golf-match late last night, Denny playing the best ball of Winsor and me and giving us 3 bisques. We lost the first 4 holes through sheer

tomfoolery on the greens. Bucking up alternately we stood on the sixteenth tee 1 up with all bisques gone. Now bogey for the last 3 holes is 5, 4, 4, and par 4, 4, 3. Young Master Denny finished in 4, 3, 2, which was just a *leetle* too good for the boys.

Spent the afternoon at the Essex Farmers' Point-to-Point Meeting at Stow St. Mary's. I doubt whether there is anything better than cold chicken and claret under a Meredithean sky with a warm April wind blowing. Had 3 bets. Somebody tipped me Can Do. But it couldn't, and I heard afterwards that that wasn't the animal's name. Then I backed Royal Bishop, whose jockey turned out to be twice the size of our George. Or looked it, though possibly I exaggerate. Finally I tried to get my money back on "White, black sleeves and cap." The winner, of course, was "Black, white sleeves and cap."

April 24 *Wednesday.* Back to London, having done myself pretty well as the six days' hotel bill for £36 13*s.* 8*d.* sufficiently proves. Jock reasonably asks what I expect if I *will* have palatial suites in a hotel called Palace. I can't help asking a friend to dinner. I can't help the wretched suite being on the first floor; it just had to be, for one of my phobias is top-storey bedrooms. When I arrived I found they had reserved for me a suite in the top corner of this castellated eyrie, with my proposed bedroom in the very nook and a choice of three windows! Looking down, the crowds on the promenade seemed no bigger than their heads. Even my luggage had to be at once descended, for I wouldn't let a toothbrush of mine spend ten minutes at that dizzy height.

April 26 *Friday.* A mixed evening, yesterday, which began with confusing two phials which have stood on my dressing-table for months. One is a Heppel concoction for waking the dead, and the other a sleeping draught left over from some illness. Desiring to be in good form for the theatre followed by Dorothy Ward's party, I made a dive for the Heppel and realised afterwards that I had grabbed

the wrong bottle. By midnight I was fully awake again and thoroughly ready for the party, which consisted of Dorothy herself, radiant in sky-blue satin and tangerine hair, Delysia with four rows of pearls against shoulders gleaming like Cornish cream, Vi Loraine with a nose which is the Supreme Architect's masterpiece in putty, that combination of ship's figure-head and old war-horse which is Bertha Belmore, and Vera Pearce, deliciously explaining how in inoculating her some surgeon had broken his entire stock of needles against an impregnable thigh. And a lot more people, so that I had the sensation of really Seeing Life.

Spent from half-past three till four in the morning trying to dissuade young Peter Glenville from playing lead in a play on Rossetti which Nancy Price has in hand. Reminded him how Gyles Isham would have done better on the London stage if he had not made such a handsome beginning at Oxford. I hear, by the way, that Gyles, whom the Garbo has chosen for leading man in her next picture, writes from Hollywood to say that he has been there six weeks and that the most he has so far seen of the goddess is the tail of her skirt disappearing through a distant doorway.

April 27 Saturday. To Birmingham, where I found the horses in grand bloom, and ready to have their showing shoes put on. Tulip and Diamond are bang up to all I expected from them with the additional year over their heads, and interest, in the sense of curiosity, now centres in my new purchase, Ego. I am a little bit nervous about Bryony on account of her colour which is jet black. I am afraid she will miss Tulip's four white socks. But we shall see. At the moment Ego looks like being the sensation among my little lot. If he were only a hand and a half bigger he would be certain champion at Olympia.

I wonder, by the way, that the sport of showing harness horses is not more popular than it is. It has everything that a hobby should have for the man of moderate means. It is one hundred times less costly than keeping racehorses, and the little man will always beat the millionaire if he has the

horse-sense and the big fellow hasn't. In other words, showing horses is an art and a very fine art, giving almost unlimited scope. It is spectacular, the result is to be appraised in terms of beauty, the owner of a stud is like the owner of some great house taking his guests through a gallery of bronzes that are alive and breathing, it takes place in the open air amid crowds of excited lookers-on, it refreshes the mind since if you are properly engaged in horse-showing everything else must be excluded, and finally it is linked up with that proverbial thing, the Englishman's love of a good horse. Indeed I would say that the love of the Hackney is a deeper and a finer thing than the love for any other breed of sporting animal, since gambling does not enter into it, and in my view three-fourths of the interest in thoroughbreds and greyhounds is the betting interest. The harness horse is one of the two last links with the England of the 18th and 19th centuries, the England of uncontaminated roads and inns which were not road-houses, the England of the sporting prints.

By the way, Albert had in his pocket this week-end a box of " England's Glory " matches with this little jingle printed on the reverse side:

> At this Prestbury inn lived Fred Archer the jockey,
> Who trained upon toast, Cheltenham water, and coffee.
> The shoe of his pony hangs up in the bar,
> Where they drink to his prowess from near and from far.
> But the man in the street passes by without knowledge
> That 'twas here Archer swallowed his earliest porridge.

The other link with the past is the hunter, against which I do not have the prejudice that hunting folk have for the Hackney. Nobody but a fool rides a Hackney, and though it is said that a dash of this blood does no harm to a show jumper I agree that the Hackney is not and is not meant to be a saddle-horse. On the other hand, a hunter in harness is an abject spectacle. I do not see why hunting people should not concede to the Hackney his merit as a harness horse, just as we Hackney people concede their merit to hunters and hacks. It is going to be a bad day for the agricultural shows if ever the harness classes drop out, since it is largely they which *entertain* the public. Lastly, a really good harness horse,

Albert Throup
Photograph by the Author

like Field Marshal, is a thing beautiful to watch. As beautiful as a yacht, and equally to be admired by the layman.

Jock makes the point that any hobby, if you are in love with it, occupies the mind to the exclusion of all else. I daresay it does. But I see that the last class in the Hebden Bridge schedule which arrived this morning is for mice, " all classes guaranteed by the National Mouse Club," with a championship prize of five shillings for the Best Mouse in the show. I have no doubt that Jock is right and that for those who are mouse-minded this championship is just as important as any in which I am interested. But the maxim that " a good big 'un will always beat a good little 'un " holds good in the showing game as in everything else, and the champion harness horse at Olympia seems to me to provide a more thrilling spectacle, and hence to be a thing of more desirable ownership, than your champion mouse however magnanimous, in Pistol's phrase.

April 28 *Sunday.* Came back from Birmingham, arriving about eight, and there being nothing else to do went for what in anybody who was not the dramatic critic of *The Sunday Times* would be recognised as an unashamed pub-crawl. Met a sandwichman bearing a placard with the words: " Do You Know Where You Are Going To Spend Eternity ? " and heard a Cockney say: " Gorblimey, I don't even know where I'm going to spend the Jubilee ! " During my peregrinations tumbled across Leo Pavia greatly agitated about a name for his new piano piece which it appears is a combination of Bolero and Polonaise. It is characteristic of him that having failed to capture one market he should now try two at once, though it is just by refusing to know when they are beaten that the Jews have always got on. It is also like them to nobble this supposedly British characteristic, whereas the English have never sensed the advisability of getting hold of some good Jewish characteristic and making it their own. Leo submitted half-a-dozen titles in vile Spanish on the principle, I suppose, that the worst Spanish title is a better selling proposition than the best Polish.

April 29 *Monday.* Took Jock to lunch at the Ivy. He chooses what to eat and drink in the way that he plays gramophone records; the one has to be a meal and the other a concert. I blundered about with cold beef and beer, but Jock must needs go whoring after goulash, asparagus, and a parrot-green sweet; to drink with this he chose Tavel, which I suggested he ordered to complete the colour symphony. Jock just grinned and said if I intended to dictate an article afterwards it would read like Tavel's Bolero ! Over coffee we discussed whether I ought to include in the diary the article from this week's *Sunday Times*. I said I thought it was of ephemeral interest, but Jock said No. " Suppose wee Bergner turns oot to be anither Duse. You'll joost gang doon to posterrity as the gomeril that said she couldna act ava ! " Obviously the Tavel was potent, or else Jock was merely at his old game of pretending that a ha'porth of alcohol knocks him over, the truth being that he can drink enough to float a battleship without turning a hair. But what he said was right. It is the old Darwin-Lamarck business all over again. Darwin is always supposed to have said that some men have had tails like monkeys, whereas actually it was Lamarck who said some monkeys had no tails. The English public in the 'seventies could not distinguish the difference between the two statements, and when I say that Bergner cannot be called great on the strength of one little play, everybody assumes me to have said that she cannot be great in any play ! I am determined to put my heel on that lie whenever it crops up.

Here, then, is the article which took the form of Open Letter to St. John Ervine:

MY DEAR ST. JOHN,

Your article of Sunday last conveys the impression of being willing to wound and yet afraid to strike. Or did you bethink you of your Army days and that pawky maxim " No names, no pack-drill " ? I am afraid that in this instance your caution has not preserved you from a spot of necessary correction. You write:—

" It was only the other day that some of the critics were making asses of themselves by saying that they could not

possibly tell whether or not Miss Elisabeth Bergner was a great actress until they had seen her in other plays than *Escape Me Never*. Couldn't they ? Then, in heaven's name, why are they critics ? I say now, once and for all, that the man who could not instantly tell that Bergner is a great actress after seeing her in Miss Kennedy's play does not know the beginnings of his job and is incapable of pronouncing an opinion on acting."

It would be mock-modesty on my part either to pretend that I am not one of the asses to whom you refer, or to suppose that you have not heard of, even if you have not read, an article contributed by me to this paper in December, 1933. I therefore invite, or rather in view of what you have written, command your attention to the following facts. The criticism in this paper of Miss Bergner's performance in *Escape Me Never* was written by Mr. George Bishop, who came to my assistance when I was laid up. Curious to know what other colleagues had written I read most of the notices. I found one critic of note writing: " I bow to Bergner as a reed bends to the storm. I sink in her presence as a stone drops in the sea. No memories of Bernhardt beset me. No dreams of Duse cause conflicting comparisons." In less flowery language this could only mean that in this critic's opinion Miss Bergner was an actress of the calibre of Bernhardt and Duse. I found another critic writing: " I am humbly grateful to Elisabeth Bergner for a performance which, I confess, has had the effect of halving my interest in the work of any of our own young actresses, because, though they are star material, she is of the stuff, I suspect, of the immortals—Mrs. Siddons, Rachel and Duse."

It was the rehearsal of these world-names which prompted me to look into this matter of greatness, and incidentally to come to the support of Mr. Bishop, who had written: " Whether Elisabeth Bergner is a great actress must be decided after we have seen her as Juliet or Saint Joan. In *Escape Me Never* she has been fitted as a man is fitted for a dress suit. As a starring vehicle the play is admirable, but it hardly exists outside the leading actress." In my subsequent article, entitled, " What is a Great Actress ? " I attempted to define what it is that constitutes *greatness* in a player. What is it which distinguishes a great actress from one who is good, or fine, or

exquisite, or even remarkable? Will you please note that in what follows, as in my article of fifteen months ago, I use the word "great" in its absolute sense, and not loosely after the manner of young people hailing any piece of competence as "marvellous"? And perhaps this will be the most convenient place to point out to you that in the first paragraph of my article I wrote: "It is not my intention to carp at the triumph which Miss Bergner has achieved in a performance of exquisite sensibility brought off with extraordinary dexterity." I agree that a critic would be an ass who needed more from Miss Bergner than her Gemma to be convinced that he was in the presence of an actress exquisite, sensitive, dexterous, and out of the ordinary.

But a player may be out of the ordinary without being *great*. Perhaps analogy, if it is carefully used, will help. W. G. Grace was a great batsman because he could play all kinds of bowling on all kinds of wickets. You would not, I think, call a batsman great on the strength of one innings however magnificently played on a particular wicket against a necessarily limited set of bowlers. You would not call a surgeon great because you had seen him cut off a little finger, however deftly that amputation had been performed. You would not call a portrait-painter great by virtue of one likeness, however well conceived and executed. I will agree that having viewed a fine innings, a skilful operation, and a brilliant portrait you might be inclined to suspect their executants of more extended capacity, even to think of them in terms of greatness. But it would be a potential greatness, and certain critics of Miss Bergner did not so safeguard themselves.

In the matter of a claim for greatness based on isolated work you will probably say that Lesseps, for example, was a great engineer if only in virtue of the Suez Canal. Indeed that is a point I should like you to make, for it makes one of mine. That canal covered the whole field of engineering. Similarly I might at a pinch call a player great who had perfectly or even reasonably satisfied me as Hamlet or Cleopatra. But consider the character Miss Bergner was called upon to portray, and which the critic who compared her with Bernhardt and Duse accurately described as a "perky little baggage, sprawling and splashing her bare legs athwart a chair, lolloping her arms over a table." Can we not agree that if Miss Bergner had filled out this little

baggage with all that sweeping grandeur and essential nobility of mien, gesture and declamation, lacking possession of which a tragic actress cannot be called *great*, she must have been false to the character and so betrayed her author? It was the strong conviction of this which prompted me, not to deny these powers to Miss Bergner, but to invite her to appear in some other part admitting of their display. Nothing happened.

I find it difficult to understand that an artist for whom the rank of greatness is claimed should not during her twelve months in this country have moved heaven and earth, and more particularly Mr. Cochran, to allow her to appear in another part. And obviously in some rôle permitting her to reveal that side of her art which is not concerned with the portrayal of gaminerie however tender and however touching. I had in mind an afternoon with Hedda Gabler, or Marguerite Gautier, or Madame Ranevsky, all parts in the répertoire of any great Continental actress and familiar in her mouth as household words. In a letter to this paper I suggested that the Old Vic., which was then presenting *The Cherry Orchard*, should invite Miss Bergner to give a guest performance. I was given to understand that, if I may put it so, Baylis was willin'. But again nothing happened.

Time has a way of composing differences, and it never does to neglect Time. Among English players of the last fifty years—for as a child of seven I was taken to see Toole—I can count only three whom I would include in this category of absolute greatness, as being kin, that is to say, with all I can glean of Garrick, Kean, Kemble, Siddons, Macready, Phelps. Those three are Irving, Ellen Terry and Dame Madge Kendal. Yet Irving was not hailed as *great* on the strength of Jingle, or Ellen Terry because of her Pauline Deschappelles, or Madge Robertson for her Susan in *William and Susan*, withdrawn because play and performance compelled too many tears. These great players won to enduring fame not in single battles, but after hard-won victories in many fields. The world has always held, and will always hold, that the great marksman is not a man who finds the bull's-eye with his first shot, but he who goes on finding it.

Here is a sentence which all young dramatic critics and even established ones in danger of loose thinking should

have printed in letters of gold over their desks. It is the first sentence in G. H. Lewes's essay on Edmund Kean: "The greatest artist is he who is greatest in the highest reaches of his art."

May I say that as far as I am concerned the subject is now closed? The object of this letter is not to provoke controversy between us, but to get you to understand what exactly was the point I made a year ago about Miss Bergner's acting.

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE.

April 30 *Tuesday.* Spoke on the stage of the Gaiety Theatre on behalf of a society for providing hospitals with books. I had not realised that when the lights are down the darkness is such that it is like speaking into the Womb of Time. Stopped, therefore, after my first sentence and asked to have the lights turned on, after which all was plain sailing.

Return in *All Rights Reserved* of Ronnie Squire, after his accident. A quite amusing little comedy, though I fell asleep in the second act owing to the heat. I suppose it is too much to ask a theatre dug in the bowels of the earth to have a sliding roof.

Went to Rules to await Monty who had to extricate himself from the *Tristan* crush at the Opera. He says that nobody goes to *Tristan* nowadays except old ladies of seventy who still picture themselves as Isoldas panting on a bank.

While I was waiting I solemnly read through all the day's papers. It appears that last night, when the Opera season started with *Lohengrin*, Max Hirzel was suddenly laid up with a cold and Melchior deputised without rehearsal. *The Daily Mirror* reporter had a most affecting article describing how Hirzel in floods of tears and catarrh stood in the wings, and each time Lohengrin came off indicated to him where the next cut was to be! Whereas the critic of *The Star* said the opera was played without cuts. The point is interesting because we must deduce either that a well-known critic doesn't know his opera, which is unthinkable, or that a dashing reporter was giving scope to a generous imagination. In any case there was no

need for anybody to stand in the wings: all they had to do was to send on the Swan with a message.

May 1 *Wednesday.* In the evening went to *The Co-Optimists* who were resolutely unfunny. Leslie Banks took me to supper in Park Lane, and I could not help seeing that the bill was £4 0*s.* 10*d.* I don't know what the tenpence was for, but the odd four pounds paid for two mouthfuls of consommé, two wings of chicken with a slice of tongue, a bottle of champagne, and two cigars. I suppose the cabaret was worth it, though before we got to the one good turn, twenty minutes were inflicted on us of a young lady singing a lugubrious ditty about the River being the penalty for "playing with another woman's man"—the oldest stuff of the most maudlin music-hall. Leslie is a first-class host and a delightful companion. He challenged my theory of the decay of modern acting, instancing Barbara Everest's Queen Anne and Edith Evans's Agatha Payne. He also said that an actor who wants to maintain his soul should do so by keeping up the standard of his week-day plays. For himself he utterly refused to make a living out of muck and at the same time go highbrowing on Sunday evenings, "which means playing Ibsen in a toupet."

May 2 *Thursday.* Luncheon party at Cochran's. C. B. in great form and Evelyn still better. The party was small and all the other guests were somebodies though I didn't catch any of their names. I rather gathered that one of them was a Czecho-Slovakian, and anyhow his wife was as lovely and distinguished as a Russian actress. There was a Scotch politician and his lady, and I don't think that Cocky was merely being polite when he said that in his experience the Edinburgh audience was the best in the country, being a shade quicker in the uptake even than a London one.

There was an awkward moment when a lady with a very large hat and a bird-like manner turned to me and said: "What do you think of the Bergner film?" at which I took a diplomatic mouthful of lobster salad. But she was not to be put off and, having waited while I disposed of this, repeated

the query. I mumbled something about vexed questions, whereupon she said: " Well, it may be a poor film, but you must agree that Bergner is a great actress ! " So I dropped my fork. A little later she asked me how I had spent the morning, and I told her writing my diary. " How very interesting ! Are you going to publish it ? " came next. Me: " I have already published some of it." The lady: " That's very odd ! How come I to have missed it ? " Later I told Jock that I supposed it was good for me to be snubbed like this, though I was more than a little surprised as the woman said she read everything. Jock replied: " I spend my nights talking to people who have never heard of you ! "

For this I have decided to *dictate* diary to him for a week instead of writing it out by hand.

May 4 *Saturday.* Wyndham's re-opened last night to resume the run of *Sweet Aloes* after a break of six weeks during which Diana Wynyard had an operation. This is fantastic and without precedent, and couldn't have happened in Ellen Terry's day. Does this mean that Diana is a better actress ? Or a prettier woman ? No. The real answer is that Ellen never appeared in any play quite so gorgeously silly. Seymour Hicks is in great form these days. At lunch the other day Perry, the lawn-tennis player, came up for discussion with reference to the space given by the newspapers, entirely without his connivance or consent, to the questions of his marriage and whether he is going to turn professional. " He should play more and be talked about less," said somebody. Seymour at once jumped in with: " What you mean, my dear fellow, is that we want less Perrier and more Jouet."

Have run away from what some witty communist has called the Punch and Jubilee Celebrations, unlike Eddie Marsh who claims that he likes " participating in ebullitions of loyalty." The flags and bunting, beneath which London is buried, destroy the city and are an affront to Portland stone. But they undeniably make for gaiety. The reason I have run away—and to Southend—is that the show will be over by

one o'clock, everybody will be drunk by four, after which a dreadful Katzenjammer will set in. Here I shall just play golf and work.

P.c. from Tait giving me his new address in case I ever want to write again. Has this postscript: "Allott has gone nuts." Shall always like these children.

Dined last night with an old Manchester friend to whom I sold calicoes before the war. He vouches for the authenticity of this letter from a native of Lagos in Nigeria to the owners of the vessel which he was helping to load:

SIR,

My statement to you about my speech to my lawyer when he came to demand as per legal orders the sum of £50 for my poor damaged body by falling in Company's lighter while doing my honest duty on account of which i might have gone to heaven that day. Priáse the Lord I did not go. But, Sir, when you said to my legal advice,

1st. that I was drunken.

2nd. that cause of drunkenness was stealing gin from lighter,

Well, Sir, these two speeches 1st, and 2nd proved that you are a son of the father of lies, i.e. Devil because said gin had been freely drunk at 8 a.m. prompt. I fell headlong into lighter at 11 a.m. prompt. At 11 a.m. gin had passed through body so cause of top-heaviness had finished. Therefore you are the very first-born of the father of lies to wit Devil. Because 2nd charge of stealing gin is libel. beware sir do not take away my poor character beside thousand pound are often lost legal by libel. as legals cost plenty money now sir for gods sake try and sign for £50 for damage to poor frame of mortality as follows.

Fell down in lighter on tons of metal.
One head splitten.
One nose useless. (very grave)
One shoulder broken. (blood extracted)
One arm bent. (blood ditto)
One thick leg dashed. (ditto ditto)
One private member damaged. (slightly bent)
One half leg broken. (blood freely)
General conditions. (breakings-dashings-all bloody freely etc.)

Now sir this hurts are cheap at £50 please sir for gods sake sign as recovery is impossible to allow £50 when i will pay you £15 not for bribe no sir I do not sin like that but to show thanks to you and the lord for comlete recovery. I will come for book re £50 to morning meantimes may god watch and protect over your slumbers to-night so as to keep you safe still morning and I get £50 may his mercy keep and protect you from that father of lies said Devil.

(signed) YESUFU ILLORIN.

written by James Oyo, Mission school, for 2/–.

May 5 Sunday. St. John Ervine, in *The Observer* replies to my open letter. Admits having " casually mentioned " that some of his colleagues made asses of themselves over the Bergner business and showed themselves unfit for their jobs. Asks why on Sunday last I did not answer my own question as to what constitutes a great actress. That question, my dear St. John, was answered as far as I can answer it in December 1933, and it is bad journalism to repeat an article. He deals with my cricket analogy like this:

> If I had heard that W. G. Grace was a great batsman who could play all kinds of bowling on all kinds of wickets, and I had seen him knock up a magnificent century in a second-class match, should I not write myself down an ass if I were to say, " No, I cannot acknowledge that he is a great batsman until I have seen him knock up another nine centuries in Test matches "? Even if I had only seen " W.G." get a " duck," I should still be a fool if, ignoring his renown, I doubted the greatness of his batsmanship.

This is where we differ. However great the reputation of a boxer I would not put my seal to it on the strength of merely seeing him knocked out in the first round. A critic stands or falls by his own judgment, which cannot be exercised at second-hand. He is judge and jury together and can pronounce only upon oath and evidence. He is not a broker of other people's opinions. St. John is on much safer ground when he writes:

> The quality of greatness is observable in a great man or woman in the least of their activities, and it is the business

of a good critic to detect greatness even when it is not obvious.

Here, for the first time, we are on common ground. I withheld my certificate from—a vastly different thing from denying it to—the Bergner because throughout the whole of Miss Kennedy's play I caught no glimpse of greatness. Sensibility, exquisiteness, fun, pathos and lots of other qualities, but nothing that I call *great.* I have been kicking myself all week for one careless word in my Open Letter.

> You would not, I think, call a batsman great on the strength of one innings, however magnificently played on a particular wicket against a necessarily limited set of bowlers.

The carelessness consists in the use of the word " magnificently." This was unhappy, for if a batsman showed me *magnificence* as well as every other quality of a fine bat, then even on the strength of a single innings I might conceivably call him great. Magnificence is the seal-setting quality in a great actor or actress; without it the catalogue is incomplete. And it was just this quality which Bergner did not show me, and, given the part, would have been wrong to show. There is nothing in St. John's claim:

> That Miss Bergner did not betray her author by making hay of *Escape Me Never* with exhibitions of sweeping grandeur, etc., is in itself a proof of her great artistry.

This is a disingenuous use of the word " great." Of course an actress may have great artistry, meaning that she has a lot of it, without being a great, in the sense of pre-eminent, actress. That Bergner was laid up for a few weeks does not account for the fact that she has now been living and acting in two English-speaking countries for sixteen months and has appeared in one play and one part only. I ask myself what Sarah would have done if her claim to greatness had been disputed by a Lemaître, a Sarcey, or a Janin. I say she would have rammed half-a-dozen performances down his lying, ignorant throat, even if she had strangulated hernia and had

to be carried to the theatre on a litter with an operating table waiting in the wings and half the surgeons in Paris waiting with their sleeves rolled up. That is what her motto, " Quand même ! " meant. Bergner's maxim appears to be " Safety First ! " Any performance in any language would have done, and I see no reason why this adroit young woman should not have got the Yiddish players to support her in German, except, of course, as Leslie Banks said to me at supper the other evening, that any member of the Max Adler family is as good an artist as she shows herself to be in the little English play. Of course, the new piece that Barrie is always finishing may show us what we want. If it does it will be the first time a popular playwright has written a part to exploit that side of a popular actress with which her public is unfamiliar. To defy augury, is, as Hamlet knew, sometimes the tip, and the idea may well have seemed susceptible of profit in the matter not only of kudos but of the bawbee and the shekel as well. Have I wasted the whole of a glorious May morning, and a Sunday one to boot, on thrashing out the foregoing ? I think not, for unless we get our critical foundations right everything that we build on them is mere personal fancy. However, Time will solve this question, like most others, and it will be a case of Heads I don't lose and Tails St. John is whacked. For I have never said that B. isn't a great actress, and if she doesn't make good, St. John's prophecy is defeated.

To stand or to fall by Miss Gemma
Is for critics a nasty dilemma.
Some hail her as great,
Others say they must wait,
The " Eureka " school *versus* " Whoa, Emma ! "

May 6 Monday. Spent the Silver Jubilee quietly. Golf in the morning and then motored to Maldon for a *déjeuner sur l'herbe* in a setting of flat meadows, yachts and sky which was a perfect Manet. Very orderly crowd here and at Southend, and wound up the day by taking Fred Leigh and Bert to *Royal Cavalcade*, the Jubilee picture, and to supper afterwards. Jock 'phoned about one in the morning saying that he had been dancing round a bonfire at Barnet with

The Author at Play

some loyal gipsies but owing to the junketing had been unable to get anything to eat—not even junket !

May 7 *Tuesday.* That there has been no mention of nerves and golf lately does not mean that I have not been indulging in both. Am ignoring the nerves. After not touching a club for weeks have taken the game up again with as much zest as ever. But less skill. To-day I played the worst round of my life, hitting *every* drive off the neck of the club and sending the ball ten yards to square leg.

Have been reading Dame Ethel Smyth's good little book on Beecham. Years ago I was lunching at the Waldorf, having vaguely noticed that at the table behind me was a party of ill-kempt, unwashable as distinct from unwashed, ragamuffins whom I took to be the members of an orchestra. Suddenly I heard a silky, purring voice say: " Gentlemen, you may take it from me that Brahms never wrote anything that mattered." Without looking round I said loudly: " Nonsense, Sir Thomas ! " Instantly the voice resumed: " Gentlemen, you may take it from me that with the exception of 4 symphonies, 4 concertos, 200 songs and a vast quantity of chamber music, Brahms never wrote anything that mattered ! " It was in my father's dining-room that my brother Edward persuaded Beecham to give his first concert in Manchester. Delius's *Sea Drift* was in the programme. The attendance in the Free Trade Hall was under 200.

Dame Ethel devotes the second half of her book to her adventures in Egypt, including the laying-out of a 9-hole golf course in the Nubian desert and her investigation into the nature of a hermaphrodite. But she does not say whether the hermaphrodite played golf, or what was its handicap !

May 8 *Wednesday.* Read Lord David Cecil's little book on Jane Austen, in which he says he does not expect any action of his to win the praise of a Balzac or a Tolstoy, but that if he knew that Jane Austen disapproved he would worry for weeks.

Here is a bit of good invective—the first paragraph of a

letter from a lady signing herself "The Modern Joan of Arc":

> Your philosophy set forth in your article on "Young People" in the *Daily Express* yesterday—May 3—is *mouldy*, and your allegory *worm-eaten*! But it fits well enough *the cluttering spawn of the decayed aristocracy* coming from the pen of their disgruntled uncle whose boots pinch his toes and whose collar-stud rasps at his stiff-necked gentility! But this is *not* YOUTH you're abusing—or defending—*it is the refuse of polished pollution and varnished vice*; the galvanised garbage from the loins of lousy lions of *Lost Fame and faded Beldams.*

May 9 *Thursday.* The post brought two more letters written by Nigerian natives and sent by my old friend in Manchester. The first explains itself, and contains two words of which any writer might be proud:

Rd. Side House.
Bulome St., Okrika.

SIRS,

Having seen your address from a kind friend of mine who duly recommended you to be one of the good traders in universe, and having told me also of your famous stuffs, I therefore seize this opportunity to write you this letter as to get the named contents of your firm. It being my reason that, as all quite lucidaciously recognised that the best works or deeds of some men are originated by the following of the patterns of others, so it is: for I can't guess before sending any good, with the exception of books, if I don't see it. Unless I see it and have a felicity for it. Therefore may you kindly forward me with present or coming new year's patterns or catalogues. So that before Easter I may despatch my orders to you. Thanking you in anticipation to hear a good result I close with many thanks

With My Best Wishes
I remain
Yours very Truly
G. ALPHEGE ADOKIARI.

The second is from a yard sweeper, and good Pantagruelists will not want any apology:

Oke Olowogboroo Street,
Lagos.
Southern Nigeria.

DEAR SIR,

The affair that I am doing in this yard it is very hard and large too. Therefore I want 15 shillings in a month please. Because there are three shitpots. Ten shillings are not quite sorfition for me.

I shall suspect your reply. Good afternoon Sir.

I remain
Dear Sir
your's Obedient Servant
EMMANUEL K. DENNIS.

This is at least as good as Tom Shaw's story, which he swears he read in a book, of the Babu who wrote of his father: " He turned his face to the wall and died sotto voce."

May 10 *Friday.* Motored from Southend to B'ham, avoiding London and going round by Bishops Stortford and Bedford. Wired Albert to say I was coming and telling him to get the animals shod. Jock, checking the telephone operator, was just in time to overhear and stop her sending a telegram ordering the animals to be *shot* !

I see that the Poet Laureate, or somebody, has been saying that whatever is unnatural is wrong. Quite. But according to whose nature ? For the lion to lie down with the lamb would be wrong on the lion's part, the action being unlion-like, but right for the lamb. This reflection occurred to me as we were passing through Northampton, where there is a statue to Bradlaugh carved apparently out of margarine.

May 11 *Saturday.* Brother Mycroft came over to see the horses and I told him he would be allowed to teach the chauffeur how to drive the car, but not Albert how to drive Tulip. The little mare is going to be great this year, and with luck so is Diamond. Ego couldn't get his balance to-day and shall postpone opinion. Of his looks and royalty there is no doubt. Bryony has decided to disappoint me, and after promising well has fallen off terribly. She is

now not a show mare at all and there is nothing for it but to let her have a foal and put her away for a year.

Went to Birmingham in the evening and saw an amazingly good show at the Hippodrome. One acrobatic turn, the Carr Brothers, by barefooted tramps, and another by the Gaudsmith Brothers, two Italian Jews, or so they seemed, with two French poodles. Mycroft, Albert Throup, Fred Leigh and myself shared a box and laughed so much that we nearly fell out of it. The programme wound up with Teddy Brown looking like Balieff, Oscar Asche, and Gilbert Miller rolled into one, and doing hairbreadth feats on the xylophone without ever looking at the instrument. Took Adrianne Allen, Ray Massey, and Gladys Cooper to supper at the Queen's Hotel where I bravely ordered two portions of foie gras among five and insisted on non-vintage Bollinger.

May 12 *Sunday.* Brother Mycroft was in excellent form yesterday. He told the chauffeur that he drove too fast on crowded roads, and also told Albert that he drove the horses too fast on the hard ground. Instructed all of us in the topography of the place though he had never been there before, and wound up by finding fault with the local railway time-table. After much telephoning with stationmasters they were forced to agree that *Mycroft was right* and that a fast train from Birmingham to Manchester, which was not in the local guide, did in fact run on Sundays !

Saw Ego out again this morning—just as good as he was bad yesterday. In the afternoon motored over to Offley Ley where Henriques was giving a show of the horses he is sending to the National. Viking is superb. But then he is almost *hors concours* as he is a stallion and the recognised English champion harness-horse: leaving him out of it I would not exchange Tulip, Diamond, and Ego for Nanette and any other two animals they have on the place.

May 13 *Monday.* Wrote to the King ! Said that while he had been playing to overcrowded streets the theatres had been playing to empty houses, and suggesting that one or two of the Princes should be told off to pay one or two

visits to plays, and not necessarily musical ones. No wit or impertinence in the letter, which I couched in what I vaguely imagined to be courtier-like phrases, including one about the loyalty of the profession being proverbial, and " are not its members still Their Majesties' Servants ? " All joking apart, the takings of the theatres during Jubilee Week dropped £50,000, and many good shows cannot stand it.

In the evening took Jock to see Seymour Hicks in *The Miracle Man*. This proved to be preposterous nonsense which made us both giggle so much that I thought we might be turned out, though a theatre which housed *Young England* for so long should have got used to bad behaviour. Seymour has taken the theatre for a year, and I hope on somebody else's money. The present piece won't do and isn't within miles of doing, not because it is a bad play but because it isn't the kind of bad play in which sentimental landladies can believe. Went on to the Savage afterwards and had ecstatic reunion with Peter Page returned from his world-tour looking reasonably fit, though I think his old enemy, the gout, while temporarily routed is not vanquished. Peter told us that he had visited Gauguin's grave, tidied it up, and put some flowers on it because he thought Gauguin was a fine and dandy painter. I'm very glad he is back since he strikes a note not of bookish highbrow culture but of easy, man-about-town familiarity with cultivated things. Since George Mair died nobody else has had this note. Also he has a beautiful sense of words, as when in reply to some earnest young man asking to which opera he should send his parents, he replied: " Oh, *bung* 'em along to *Lohengrin* ! "

May 14 *Tuesday.* Snow, hail and the thermometer thirty degrees below Jubilee Day.

Took the chair at a luncheon to Cedric Hardwicke given by the English-Speaking Union at the Criterion. Big crowd. Made two speeches, both short, and, I hope, bright.

May 15 *Wednesday.* *The Times*, which always says " Mr. A. suitably responded," says of yesterday's luncheon: " Mr. James Agate presided." Why not " suitably

presided "? Is not presiding in the same category as responding? What have I done to offend *The Times*? Incidentally, what is it doing to print this in its Agony Column?:

Bereaved Peacock wants Young Wife; introductions invited.

"If you want jewelled English," said somebody the other day, "Saki and Lawrence are our best writers."

Letter from Buckingham Palace expressing the hope that "now that the Jubilee week is over the attendance at theatres will greatly increase."

May 16 *Thursday.* A terrible thing happened to-night. Had given Fenton dinner at Great Fosters and was driving home about 11.30. It happened at Redfont, where the road though good is not so wide as the Great West Road. We were behind a little Ford and both doing about 45 m.p.h., with a 2-seater coming the opposite way. Suddenly a big Hispano-Suiza came up behind and went past us at, I estimate, 60 miles an hour, possibly more. To avoid him the on-coming 2-seater pulled on to the grass, and the big car cut across the Ford's bows and with a great crashing and splintering proceeded to turn round three times ending up exactly parallel with the Ford, on the grass on its left and facing the same way. It was a bad moment when we realised the Hispano couldn't get through and Bert already began to brake. I had the impression that the H.S. was level with the Ford at the moment the 2-seater was pulling off the road to avoid the head-on crash. Bert and I got out to expostulate with the driver of the H.S. and I was telling him I should report him to the police when two men came running up to say that there was a man dying by the roadside. He was a motor-cyclist who had been behind the 2-seater. Bert ran back, but I funked it. The poor fellow was in a terrible state and so I sent B. to 'phone for the ambulance which arrived in under ten minutes. The police came up very quickly and we got away in about half-an-hour. As I see it the sudden braking of the 2-seater caused the motor-cyclist to pull out,

when he was caught by the Hispano-Suiza. But there can be no justification for cutting-in at that speed. The man driving the H.S. was in evening dress and a swell.

May 17 *Friday.* The police rang through to say the motor-cyclist died in hospital three hours after admission, and I am to attend the inquest.

Silly play about a duke, the duchess and his mistress drew an immensely fashionable audience to His Majesty's. *Hervey House*, the thing is called. Every horseman knows that however good a horse may be at home you don't know his real value till you get him to a show and see him against other animals. It is the same with actors. I had long wanted to see Fay Compton and Gertrude Lawrence together. In my view Fay won the class easily, with Joyce Bland, lacking the range and liberty of the other two, third. Supper at the Savoy but the room was so hot that I had to leave early.

May 19 *Sunday.* Excellent dinner at the Hardwickes'. Cedric, Jack Priestley, George Bishop and self sat down to Bridge afterwards. This was poor, but some of the talk grand. P. told a good story about a nigger telling his girl not to walk home through a wood but to go round it, since in the wood was another nigger with a talent for rape. The girl replied: " Sambo, ah's suttinly go round. Ah rapes very easy ! "

May 20 *Monday.* Inquest. St. John Hutchinson appeared for owner of the Hispano-Suiza and got him off with severe censure. I admire St. John very much.

May 21 *Tuesday.* Ivor Novello, on being asked his opinion of my Diary, said he was entranced but that he thought the Grossmiths' Diary of a Nobody was better. I suspect Bobbie Andrews of having put him up to this. At the wedding of Dorothy Hyson and Robert Douglas, the clergyman summoning bride and bridegroom to the altar and addressing them inaudibly and interminably, Bobbie was heard to whisper: " I think he's trying to sell them a play."

May 22 *Wednesday.* Lunched at the Ivy with George Bishop. Marie Tempest told me she had arranged that on Tuesday next the Queen should not send for her until after the show as she would be too busy. Mary was wearing the loveliest hat, a dinky assemblage of turtle-doveage and polyanthery.

Letter in *The Times* to-day from Mr. H. H. Cobb, as to when and in what match Albert Trott drove over the pavilion at Lord's. He gives the Middlesex v. Sussex match on June 8, 9 and 10, 1889, the bowler being F. W. Tate. He claims to have had a better view than Warner because P. F. W. was probably in the pavilion and he, Cobb, was Trott's partner at the wicket. This should settle it, except that people would never accept Ellen Terry's recollection of her mother's confident statement as to the house in which Ellen was born.

May 28 *Tuesday.* Am dog-tired, but mustn't slacken. On Friday I motored up to Manchester, partly to see the Hebden Bridge Show and partly to break in my new clothes for Richmond and Olympia. Arrived at Fritz Dehn's new house at Disley at 10 o'clock and found an excellent supper of guillemots' eggs and cold duck awaiting me. Olive Dehn, aged nineteen, had just returned from Germany where she was examined by four detectives on account of a poem she had written, intercepted in the post to England, about a Nazi dog which inadvertently fell in love with a non-Aryan bitch. She is a clever kid, and has had verses in *Country Life* and *Punch*. On Sunday motored to Birmingham, the route being Disley, Buxton, Ashbourne, Sudbury, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield. This was a new road to me, through lovely, virgin country, with almost no traffic. This did not prevent two motor-cycle combinations from coming into collision with a motor-car driven by a man with one eye. A little girl who brought out water told us that something of the sort happened every Sunday at their corner. We took a woman with a cut leg to the hospital at Sutton Coldfield.

The horses are grand. Diamond and Ego in tremendous fettle, but Tulip being an experienced actress now only runs

through her part at rehearsal and waits for the show. Do not suppose I shall see them again before the National Hackney Show at Weymouth next week.

The Marie Tempest matinée took place this afternoon at Drury Lane. Here is what I said about her over the wireless to-night:

I am not going to waste words in giving a list of Marie Tempest's triumphs throughout fifty years. Besides you all know what they are. Nor can I hope to tell you how she looked in a dress of rose-pink silk shot with silver, the sort that Sargent painted.

There are two points I want to make, a little point and a big point. The little point is this—if we were writing to, say, a cultured and intelligent foreigner, how should we describe our great English comédienne ? I think we should say that Marie Tempest is an actress. By this I mean that there is no corner of the globe where she could be mistaken for anything else. In Paris, Berlin, Budapest, Sydney, Chicago—all over the world—she would be recognised as an actress. She is not one of these intellectual players who have to deliver themselves of some world-redemptive gospel in order to make it worth anybody's while to listen to them. She can very nearly do without a play, and Heaven knows that sometimes she has had to !

She is mistress of all the forgotten arts of the stage—the art of walking, talking, and wearing clothes. She is mistress of the forgotten art of being a lady—an art almost entirely lost in these days. Marie Tempest is an actress of wit; and if that quality had not been in the world, she would have invented it.

Her technique from her earliest musical-comedy days has always been perfect, and to her certainty in the matters of poise, balance, rhythm, and attack must be added her mastery of youth. Age is one of the lawful attributes of the tragic actor or actress; we expect some measure of old age from an Irving and a Ristori, a Geneviève Ward and a Macklin. These are the high priests and priestesses of the temple, and it is expected of them that they should be within measurable distance of the mysteries they interpret. And we are not surprised when they are.

But the business of a comédienne is to hold the years at arm's length. Which brings me to my second and big

point. Marie Tempest's triumph is not only to be a famous actress or to be and look young at seventy. Her peculiar distinction is to have brought a talent to the stage, to have disciplined that talent through all the degrees of accomplishment which culminate in greatness, to have appreciated and kept before her that major quality of proportion, and to have followed the profession of actress with as much zeal and fervour as Florence Nightingale followed that of nurse or Grace Darling that of life-saver at sea. For any talent has to be nursed, and the theatrical seas can be stormy indeed!

This, then, is a moral quality, and one of the greatest. It has been my business for a good many years to record the artistic triumphs of this great little lady. To-day my privilege is to do honour to a precious talent not one grain of which has been spilt or squandered.

Further, it is a talent which is not yet garnered. I don't know what in words she has said to Mr. Graham Browne, her husband and partner through so many years. But I know that her thoughts were Browning's when he wrote:

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be.

Mary went through it all with perfect aplomb. The King and Queen were there, but all George Bishop's art and craft failed with old Madge Kendal, besought in vain to bestow on the affair the august sanction of her bonnet. Hayden Coffin didn't show up either. Of all the two hundred and fifty actors who took part in the masque the one I admired most was John Gielgud. I wonder whether John is a *great* actor. His grace and poise are remarkable, and his voice would melt the entire Inland Revenue. Perhaps he is a great actor in the making. It occurred to me this afternoon that I have never seen a great *young* actor. Sarah, Réjane, Duse, Madge Kendal, Ellen Terry, Irving, Coquelin, Guitry père, Wyndham, Hare, even Forbes-Robertson, who was forty-four when he played Hamlet, were all old or getting on when I first saw them. Does this mean that I instinctively regard age as an essential quality in great acting? It is handsome of me to record the query, and I sincerely hope the Bergnerites don't get hold of it!

Photo : Anthony

Marie Tempest at her Jubilee

May 29 Wednesday. *The Daily Express* asked me to do an impression of the Rattenbury Trial at the Old Bailey. The facts were very simple and hardly disputed. Mrs. Rattenbury, aged thirty-eight, wife of an architect aged sixty-seven, had been the mistress of her eighteen-year-old chauffeur named Stoner. Somebody had hit the husband over the head with a mallet, both of them having at one time or another taken the blame on themselves.

It was all very like the three French major novelists. The way in which the woman debauched the boy so that he slept with her every night with her six-year-old son in the room, and the husband who had his own bedroom remaining cynically indifferent—all this was pure Balzac. In the box Mrs. Rattenbury looked and talked exactly as I have always imagined Emma Bovary looked and talked. Pure Flaubert. And last there was that part of her evidence in which she described how, trying to bring her husband round, she first accidentally trod on his false teeth and then tried to put them back into his mouth so that he could speak to her. This was pure Zola. The sordidness of the whole thing was relieved by one thing and one only. This was when Counsel asked Mrs. Rattenbury what her first thought had been when her lover got into bed that night and told her what he had done. She replied: " My first thought was to protect him." This is the kind of thing which Balzac would have called sublime, and it is odd that, so far as I saw, not a single newspaper reported it.

All the time I was sitting there, there was something at the back of my mind which gave a picture of the woman in the dock better than the parallel with Emma. I couldn't think what it was, but on getting home told Jock, who found what I was looking for in my old *Manchester Guardian* cutting-book. The passage is part of a notice by Montague:

> The Lady Ellingham of the play is animated by Mrs. Campbell into one of the women whom she acts as a class rather than individually—so that her acting almost seems like an argument, a theory of femininity, like Matthew Arnold's about " things that live and move Mined by the fever of the soul." Her Lady Ellingham seems, behind all

that she directly says, to be asserting the title of a certain temperament to more of the good things of the emotional world than it commonly gets; the appealing lassitude, the troubled and plaintive tenderness all seem like changing modes following some one quest.

The general opinion appears to be that the woman will get off.

May 30 *Thursday.* Took Denys Blakelock to supper. He confessed to a *bon mot* at my expense. Asked whether I was going to the first night of *Acropolis* he had said: "Sure. I met him this afternoon coming away from his crammer's!" Promises to invite me home to lunch with his people as soon as I can satisfy him that I am "vicarage-trained."

May 31 *Friday.* Mrs. Rattenbury acquitted and Stoner condemned to death. The second must not happen. If I had been on the jury I would have stuck out for a verdict of manslaughter, bad though that would have been in law, because there is no certainty that the recommendation to mercy, made in this case, will be given effect to. Such a recommendation should automatically mean that the man will not hang. In its account of the last scene *The Daily Sketch* has this cryptic sentence: "A mere boy, but it may be that he behaved as a man behaves." What a rum thing is the mind! This trial has moved me immensely, probably because I saw part of it, while the dreadful affair at Quetta makes no impression. The 20,000 said to have perished in that earthquake might be flies. I see no remedy for this; one can't order one's feelings, and to pretend something different is merely hypocrisy. I suppose one could just shut up and perhaps ought to. Meanwhile the Rattenbury verdict, happening in the afternoon, has given an immense fillip to Emlyn Williams's *Night Must Fall*, a good, highly imaginative play about a murder in an Essex bungalow.

At this moment Jock rings up from a call-box to say that he is at King's Cross, where a company of girl guides is parading and playing "Colonel Bogey" on flutes, blissfully unaware that the entire populace, grinning from ear to ear,

knows the tune as "—— and the same to you ! " A couple of sailors, says Jock, have got into knots through laughing, and cannot be untied.

June 3 *Monday.* Leo said: " Since I made it up with Jock [after some absurd quarrel] we've been on worse terms than ever."

June 4 *Tuesday.* Witty letter, in verse, from Greer Garson, the new actress, of whom I said that she should not her " multitudinous nails incarnadine."

> The fault, Sir Critic, is not in ourselves,
> But in our text which strictly sets it forth
> That Fanny's finger-tips and toe-tips too
> Must scarlet be—a fashion I detest,
> And much it grieves me that this point offends.
> What ? Multitudinous nails incarnadine
> Making the green see red . . . !

June 5 *Wednesday.* To-morrow is the National Hackney Show, and the fever of waiting, which has endured since Altrincham last September, is ended at last. Eight months of getting ready. It is an immense strain, and the result of disobeying the maxim: " Le plaisir est comme la glace. Glissez, mortels, n'appuyez pas ! " I can never remember the exact form of this, or who said it.

As we were setting off in the car the newspapers came out with the placard: " Mrs. Rattenbury Stabbed and Drowned." Reggie Arkell said this was the most dramatic thing he had seen in the streets since " Titanic Sinking." The two things in this kind which have shocked me most have been the arrest of Crippen, about which I read on the pier at Llandudno—I can still point out the exact plank on which I stood—and the newspaper placard announcing the death of Marie Lloyd. I remember how this rooted me to the pavement in Tottenham Court Road.

June 8 *Saturday.* Appalling weather throughout yesterday and the day before. Torrential rain and an icy gale blowing. The show-yard a sea of mud which pulled the goloshes off my shoes. The horses floundered about with mud

up to their knees and hocks and cloaking their white fetlocks, and the waggons churning up the ground and sending out sprays of porridge. Everybody miserable and some question of cancelling the show. However they went on with it, and at night the horses had to stand in six inches of water and could not lie down, while the grooms had to do the best they could. The boxes were like the bed of a river. In the circumstances we did pretty well, Black Tulip and Diamond both getting seconds. Ego stood second for a long time, but the mud proved too much for his strength and in the end he was placed fourth. But I am convinced that he is my best animal, and he created a great impression. The classes were the strongest for many years. On the way back, went round by Aldershot. Stood outside Buller Barracks, where I was during my first month in the Army, and bunthed !

June 9 *Sunday.* Just as I was leaving for Weymouth I received a letter from Jack Priestley whose new play *Duet in Floodlight* came off after five performances. I began my *S.T.* notice of this by quoting Christian's " I am in hell, Captain Bligh, I am in hell ! " spoken as he put the Captain of the Bounty overboard, and ending with the words " Mr. Priestley is Admiral of the Dramatic Fleet and should sink or swim with his flagship." Meaning that he must leave pot-boiling alone, more particularly since his pots don't boil. So I sat down and answered Jack's S.O.S.

14, *Doughty Street, W.C.*1.
June 9, 1935.

DEAR JACK,

I am more than sympathetic, and spent a lot of time on the stand at Weymouth pretending to look at horses but really thinking my darnedest about your letter.

You seem to me to have two grievances, one not valid, and the other genuine. I am not really much concerned about the failure of *Duet in Floodlight*, any more than I was worried about Bennett's *The Pretty Lady*. Don't be offended if I say I don't think you can write this sort of thing. You haven't the touch for frothy comedy and the thing doesn't rattle like, for example, *Golden Arrow*, a vile

little piece which tickled me immensely. Before deciding that it was not your cast which killed the play I compared it—in the matter of dialogue—with such films as *Trouble in Paradise* and *The Thin Man*. I even tried to "see" Herbert Marshall and Kay Francis, and William Powell and Myrna Loy as your leading pair, and I decided it wouldn't do even with their brilliant playing. I am only telling you this to show that I tried hard to give your piece every chance.

But we are all very much concerned when a play like *Eden End* loses money. Here we get down to your fundamental trouble. But first let me say something to you about the attitude of certain papers. Haven't you, rightly, been rude to them? And don't you realise that an unspoken fiat goes forth that you aren't to be encouraged? Further, you have made a colossal success in one kind, and you ought to know enough about human nature to know that mean minds aren't going to let you get away with it a second time. It was this which you had to fight in your two best plays. You had a *succès d'estime* with *Dangerous Corner*, and with *Eden End* you actually turned the corner so far as educated opinion is concerned.

But then you should have stopped until a third play better than either of the others came along. I saw the danger light with *Laburnum Grove*, a good little piece but *not good enough for you*. I know it wasn't meant to be a major piece, but I thought then, and think now, that you, above all people, cannot risk anything except the big stuff. (If ever you do, it must be as good as Wilde.) *Cornelius* was a play in the right kind but, again in my opinion, though good not good enough. I don't want you ever again to raise the curtain until in the opinion of competent judges, meaning ME, you have improved upon *Eden End*. That was a lovely bit of work and you may not better or even equal it for another five years.

If such a play which I—forgive me—authorise you to produce, fails, then let it! Lose on it if you can afford. But don't do poorer work because you think you may lose less. *Of course* you must consider your playwriting as a kind of yacht or grouse-moor! It is because I hold this so strongly that when you write film-scenarios I look the other way. Didn't I see Gracie Fields in something of yours? Jock and I sat through it and shuddered, and

wilfully kept all notice of it—whatever film it was—out of *The Tatler* because we knew that it's this kind of thing which enables you to put on your *Eden Ends.*

Incidentally I don't agree that the Edwardian, lucrative theatre is failing us. You mustn't say this because you can't write a *Christopher Bean.* The intelligent theatre, from the Vedrenne-Barker days till now, has always been a luxury, and you aren't going to alter it.

What it all boils down to is that you must fly at masterpieces and only masterpieces. I have wanted to say this for a long time. If you must run a theatre run it on somebody else's plays, but then only as a business and not because they are works of art. You are not rich enough to encourage the Denis Johnstons as well as J. B. Priestley. Or are you? Finally, why not consult me *before* the sad event? I am always at your service, so long as you will permit me to speak the truth as I see it, bluntly.

Have just come back from Weymouth and am writing this on my last two sheets of paper. Also it is the only letter I have written by hand for more than a year!

Your devoted,

JAMES AGATE.

Here is Priestley's answer:

Isle of Wight.
June 13th, 1935.

DEAR JIMMY,

Your letter seems to me both friendly and wise. But I can't agree with a lot of it. There are some writers—the ivory tower boys—who can bide their time and then turn out something like a masterpiece every five years. I am not one of them. I am too restless, too impatient, too prolific of ideas. I am one of the hit-or-miss school of artists. Moreover, I cannot help wanting to make my plays the vehicles of various ideas that are important to me. (Even *Laburnum Grove* insinuated an idea or two into the playhouse.) Also, I think you seriously under-rate *Cornelius.* It had far more faults than *Eden End*, but I am not sure that it wasn't a far more difficult job or that it hadn't far more of myself in it. And it came nearer to what I want to do in the theatre than *Eden End* did. You see, I still regard myself as an apprentice, trying his hand at this job and that. After all, I have only been in the theatre three years, and as I have no immediate master, no direct

influences, I have to feel my way. Therefore it's no use your telling me only to produce masterpieces. Nobody—no, not even you—knows a play is a masterpiece until it is produced. You may reply that at least you can tell from a script when a play is clearly *not* a masterpiece. I agree that I must not bother with frothy stuff again, having so heavy a hand; but I must go on experimenting, learning something each time. I seem to have the sympathy of intelligent players, but not of the press or the managers. There is nothing personal in my feeling that the West End Theatre is decaying. I have my reasons. Thus, there are fewer and fewer sound managements, fewer and fewer theatres with a policy, fewer and fewer *young* playgoers. You know nothing about playgoers, going only to first nights. But most of the people who go to the theatre are middle-aged or elderly. That is why if you want to write a commercially successful play, write one about an old woman who sits in a chair, points with a stick, and always dominates the scene.

You say that the intelligent theatre was always a luxury. But it needn't be. The little theatre and repertory movement in the country is very much alive. If no less than eight repertory theatres want to play *Eden End* the very first week it is released, we can't say there is no feeling for serious drama in England. What I do say is that West End theatre-going is an anachronism, that the thing, as it is now organised, does not really belong to our time, and that it is our business—and it can be done by writing, talking, organising—to get the intelligent young into the theatre, which is something more than a show for sleepy fat rich men who've just eaten too much. Be careful, or soon you'll have nothing worth writing about; and I don't want to spend all my Sunday mornings reading you on Bernhardt.

With best wishes,
Yours,
J. B. PRIESTLEY.

June 10 *Monday.* King's Heath Horse Show. Tulip terribly fresh and excited and for a long time refused to settle. I think it was the cries of the hundreds of children round the ring which upset her. When she did at last settle she gave a magnificent display, and having been pulled in

last went right to the top and won first prize and champion twenty-guinea cup.

A little worried during the day by signs of nervous exhaustion in the right hand. At one minute I could not lift a teacup, at the next I could and did pick up a sledge-hammer. Worried because in the evening I had to write my *Express* article by hand and didn't know whether I should be able to manage it. Put the thought out of my mind with an effort and ultimately managed all right.

June 11 *Tuesday.* Smethwick Horse Show. Same horses, different result. Tulip went so high off her hocks that she couldn't go in front, which made her break continually. Brilliant snatches of forty yards or so, but never once round the ring, or even half of it. Tulip is a temperamental madam and played hell in the train both going to and coming from Weymouth and again in the motor horsebox to-day. Ego has lost so much condition through the Weymouth experience that we have decided not to take him to Richmond and to keep him for Olympia.

During the morning I played cricket with some kids including the twelve-year-old nephew of Albert's housekeeper's husband. This very small and rather ragged little boy is a mere wisp of humanity with large, pathetic eyes. But what is more to the point is that he has a feeling for the game and played my lobs with style. Can't bowl, but fields and throws in well. He wants to be a professional cricketer and I shall encourage the notion. Perhaps in ten years Lewis Turk will be playing for Warwickshire. The game was interrupted by a new arrival on the farm. This was Tudor Rose's son by Viking, an exquisite little thing, but with not enough white.

June 13 *Thursday.* Decidedly not our lucky week. Tulip gave a beautiful show at Richmond, going particularly well up and down the stand. Never broke once. Nanette headed the class and then came Nork Spotlight, Nigel Colman's new stallion. I don't care for his legs and feet, and being a stallion he is too cresty and too thick in the jaw.

Black Tulip. Albert Throup Driving

But he is a tremendously gay little horse with lashings of front action and more presence than I have ever seen in an animal under 15 hands. He was rightly placed. In the opinion of ringsiders Tulip was an easy third but the judge preferred Wensleydale Madge, which was below us at Altrincham last time out. Showing is a rum business. Second at the National, first and cup at King's Heath, an abominable show and 3rd at Smethwick and now 4th at Richmond! Like golf, showing is " Aye fechtin' agin ye." But I never liked Tulip better than to-day, and so I told Albert. After which we drowned our sorrows in cold salmon, strawberries and cream, and hock.

June 14 *Friday.* A charming and wildly discursive letter from an old and endearing Irishman. Will I stop being rude to the late W. G. Wills, the playwright and his distant cousin? Won't I agree that like Meyerbeer he knew the art of giving his public what it wanted? Then a lot about Liszt, Wagner and Brahms. Do I think that Oliver Cromwell would have won at Edgehill if the Royalists had been commanded by Gustavus Adolphus or Wallenstein? Would not that man be an ass who deemed Scipio a better general than Hannibal? This perfect letter-writer winds up with appreciations of Ernest Newman and Dorothy Sayers.

June 16 *Sunday.* All the Sunday papers, except *The Sunday Pictorial* and the *S.T.*, have gone all out for *Anything Goes*, Cochran's new show at the Palace. I didn't like this and hope I was not prejudiced by all the advance boosting, including Cocky's portentous announcement that he would darken the auditorium and raise his curtain at eight precisely. " Might be *Götterdämmerung*! " said somebody, and I said it looked more like Cockydämmerung.

Took a busman's holiday last night and went to *The Mikado* at Sadler's Wells. House packed with plenty of young people —a most heartening night. Hadn't heard it for twenty-five years or more. The two things which pleased me most were " No money, no grovel! " and the little run on the bassoon in " Three Little Maids." Martyn Green, the new Koko, is

first-rate. An excellent comedian and a beautiful dancer, with a rueful little phiz and great charm. Yet I suppose this very talented player will be unrecognised for years, while each and every dago crooner will be hailed as a great artist. The West End has got its values hopelessly upside down, and I see no signs of a return to Victorian, or even Edwardian sanity.

I dropped into the *S.T.* office about 11.15 last night, same as I have done every Saturday night for years, except when I have been away. In this way I have stopped many a howler in my stuff. Complimented Heywood, deputising for Hadley, on producing a good paper, and H. said there had been a lamentable dearth of news for the news pages. I left the office round about 11.30 and it was just about then that the awful railway disaster at Welwyn Garden City happened. Heywood must have got busy with it while I was still on the way to the club.

June 18 *Tuesday.* In preparation for the Royal Norfolk Show, where I am to judge the harness classes to-morrow, I motored to-day to Norwich going via Ipswich, Lowestoft, and Yarmouth. At the last place the season has not yet begun, and the vast Promenade and enormous Fun Fairs, quite empty and wholly idle, made up the perfect image of futility. In the rain it would not have mattered; a sunlit sea lapping busily at a gleaming pleasure-beach with nobody to take any notice is a disheartening spectacle. Dined with the other judges at the Royal Hotel at Norwich—excellent food preceded by the best glass of sherry I ever tasted in my life. Champagne excellent. One of the judges made a witty speech about sheep, and I adapted my lecture on the Renaissance of the Drama to the Increased Interest in Harness Horses !

June 19 *Wednesday.* Classes at Royal Norfolk small but very good. First-rate tussle between Henriques' champion at the National, Fleetwood Viking, and Joseph Morton's beautiful mare, Vitality. The mare was easily superior first time round and again in the stand show, Viking going very stickily. But when I sent them round again Vitality

fell away, and Viking pulling himself together put up a superb show. Here is a good example of how a judge can be unfair. A judge wanting the mare to win need not have sent them out again; a judge wanting the horse to win and knowing that the longer he goes the better he is would have kept them going. The proper thing to do is to avoid both extremes, but to keep animals going for as long as you would if you had never seen them before and were assessing for the first time what they could do.

Came home through Newmarket and along what I always think is one of the most beautiful stretches of road in England.

June 23 *Sunday.* Cocky's expected protest turned up all right, his point being that the introduction of spectacle in *Anything Goes* would have been as wrong as if he had " treated spectacularly *Anna Christie*, another play dealing with the sea and ships which I produced a few years ago." Here is a bit of my answer to this:

> But surely Mr. Cochran is confusing " producing " with " presenting " ? My recollection is not that Mr. Cochran " produced " *Anna Christie*, but that he presented a play which had already been given in America, and with the American cast. Nor, I think, will Mr. Cochran contend that he has at any time " produced " Bernhardt, Duse, the Guitrys and the Lunts. Indeed, in his *Secrets of a Showman*, he has written: " While I was in Seville Sarah Bernhardt played under my management at the Princes Theatre." But even if Mr. Cochran had not been in Seville, I doubt whether Sarah would have allowed him to dictate the plank on which she was to expire.
>
> If I were asked offhand for a list of our ten best producers of straight plays, I should say Komisarjevsky, John Gielgud, Tyrone Guthrie, Auriol Lee, André van Gyseghem, Basil Dean, Lewis Casson, Robert Atkins, Irene Hentschel and Noel Coward. Mr. Cochran's name would never occur to me. If I were asked to give a list of our best producers of revue I should imagine a small field with Mr. Cochran leading by more lengths than Tiberius.
>
> Our impresario now asks me to consider him as a musical-comedy producer. Frankly, with Betsey Prig, I don't

> believe there's no sich a person ! The whole business of a musical-comedy producer is to send on the buffoon to do his familiar stuff and, when he wants a rest, turn on the leading lovely.

The only weakness in this is that it assumes that Cocky actually " produces " his own revues. I don't know about this, but I am certain that of all of them he is the presiding genius.

Motored to Brighton and at the Royal Albion unfortunately fell in with Monty and St. John Hutchinson. Unfortunately because they had been festivating at Glyndebourne about which I have " views "—all the stronger because I have never been there ! Something tells me that there is as much intellectual snobbery here as there is social snobbery at Ascot. This is not invalidated by the fact that the operas are exquisitely done; there is often very good racing at Ascot. The bee in my bonnet is that people go to Glyndebourne because it is the musico-intellectual thing to do. But I do not believe that they would go if it could not afterwards be known that they had gone, if they had to see and hear the operas through a leper's squint and not show themselves or talk about it afterwards.

They make much play with the fact that Mozart is produced at Glyndebourne as nowhere else, that such singing and playing cannot be heard elsewhere. This again doesn't wash with me. People who are real theatre-lovers are always going to the theatre and not waiting for the transcendent visiting star. It's the old highbrow business of pretending that the wireless is not worth hearing because the real thing is better. And I honestly doubt whether the people who make so much fuss about Glyndebourne are sufficiently fond of Mozart to tune in to him at home and spend an evening silently listening to an opera with none of their co-intellectuals to see how enthralled they are. Do they, as Jock and I do, go to the fag of changing gramophone records to hear a Mozart symphony ? I suppose in the last two years we must have played the E flat and the little C Major fifty times. It is true to say that neither of us can live without music, because whenever we have a

spare minute and can find nothing good on the wireless, we rush to the gramophone. Whereas I feel that your musico-intellectual cannot live without other people knowing that he cannot live without music ! I absolve Monty and Hutchy from these charges because I know that both are genuinely fond of Mozart. But I can't help using them as whipping-boys for my *bêtes noires*, which of course is wildly tactless on my part and shocking manners. I forget exactly what insults I hurled at them over Harry Preston's lobsters, but remember Hutchy saying that it was a pity I didn't know any intellectuals, and my very nearly retorting that if he was a specimen I didn't want to ! In fact the row was as undignified as if we were three third-form boys at school. At least my side of it was, for I began it and lost my temper, whereas Hutchy and Monty kept theirs admirably.

June 24 *Monday.* Horrified to receive a postcard from Jock to say that he has spent the week-end at Glyndebourne and that the performances have been heavenly. He adds that he has been cheek-by-jowl with all the nobs, his cheek by Lady C.'s jowl !

June 25 *Tuesday.* I am in the condition known as licking one's wounds. This as a result of the horse show at Olympia. On the first day of the show in the morning try-out of the class for novice ponies under 14 hands Ego was placed absolutely last ! This was quite right. We have known all along that he is not a pony, and we ought to have waited to show him until he has grown over 14 hands, which we think he will do before August as he is exactly 14 hands now and has grown more than an inch in the last three months. In a class full of real ponies he looked like a small giraffe, and in addition was horribly narrow and tucked-up as the result of Weymouth. Also he went very sluggishly and was so obviously not himself that we took his temperature and found it to be 103. We got leave not to show him in the afternoon and packed the poor little chap off home.

Then yesterday a dreadful thing happened. The general opinion seemed to be that in the open class under 15 hands

Tulip would be second to Nanette. The judges, however, thought otherwise. In the morning try-out they first of all pulled her in fifth and after she had given a grand show up and down the stand sent her down to sixth. They seemed so determined not to like Tulip that Albert and I debated whether or not to send her in for the show proper in the afternoon. But we decided, wrongly as it turned out, to do the sporting thing and risk it.

I want to make it plain in what follows that my grievance is an absolute one and has nothing to do with the fact that we didn't get the ribbon to which we thought the mare was entitled. Any exhibitor submitting his horse to judges tacitly assumes that they are competent, honest, and painstaking. If he does not believe that they are all these things he should not enter his animal. It is an unwritten law of showing that one must accept the placing of the judges. But it is also an unwritten law that an exhibitor has the right to show his horse. Now the public at Olympia knows nothing about the morning preliminary try-out, and the proceedings when the class is publicly judged are invariably the same. The horses go round and are then drawn up more or less in order of merit as ascertainable at a first show. *Each horse is then given a single show up and down the grand-stand,* when the attention both of the judges and the public is centred upon him alone. Readjustments in the placings are then made, and it is usual for those holding the first four or five places to be sent out again for the final decisions. Yesterday afternoon the horses were drawn in as in the morning try-out except that Tulip was put down to 7th, or last but one. Now if in the considered opinion of the judges an animal of mine is 7th, and the animal has been given the chance to show the public that she is not better than 7th, then I have nothing to say. But to my dismay and disgust the first six horses were each given its single show, after which the class abruptly terminated, Tulip not being called out. To the public this can only mean that in the opinion of the judges Tulip and the animal below her were of such obviously little merit that it was not worth while giving them an individual show. I think I have definite grounds for

complaint here. After all, Tulip is known throughout the length and breadth of England to be an exquisite little mare. In the last three seasons she has been either 1st or 2nd at such shows as the National, the Royal, Oxford, Leicester, Royal Counties, Altrincham, and so forth, and both in the morning and the afternoon she gave a show of her very best. Where the *cognoscenti* round the ring said she ought to have stood is not my point. My complaint is that she was not allowed to give her stand show, and this applies equally to the animal below her. In every other previous class every animal was given its single show, and to break an invariable rule to the detriment of a renowned performer seems to me to be monstrous. That the judges were pressed for time is no excuse. The ring competitions are the basis of this horse-show as of all others, and if a performance is running too long it is the interminable side-shows which should be shortened. If the judges of their own accord refused Tulip her show, then my grievance is against them; if the Olympia management instructed the judges to act as they did, then my grievance is against the management. In either case Tulip did not get a run for her money. The entire ring-side was indignant about it.

Jock suggests that as Tulip cannot do better than last but one I should change her name to Penultima Thulip !

June 26 *Wednesday.* Stoner reprieved. 340,000 people signed the petition.

The other day I said in the *Express* that Henry James " would not last ten minutes on this paper, not because James wrote too well but because he did not write well enough." I was making the point that a man must suit his style to his medium, and that in a journalist the first essential is to say what he intends without any possibility of misunderstanding. I thought at the time that the passage was dangerous, but decided to risk it. This has brought the family down on me in the person of brother Edward:

June 22*nd*, 1935.

Twit ! Twit ! Henry James wouldn't be on the *Daily Express ten* minutes ! For one thing he'd never have had his article ready; for another, he'd have been too frightened.

But put the converse: is there anyone who could stay on the front page of *The Times Literary Supplement* for *two* minutes, let alone five years, among the celebrities of the *Daily Express*? You ought to be fair!

How Henry James would have beautifully laughed!

I am sorry if you must do this sort of thing to eke out your living!

EDWARD.

June 27 *Thursday.* Have taken a new flat about five minutes' walk from Lord's. First floor, i.e. immediately over a semi-basement. Besides the servant's room, bathroom and kitchen, there are four big rooms, two on each side of a long passage, all the same size with big bow-windows. They could all be drawing-rooms! Those in front look out on to a quiet street, those at the back overlook a lovely garden. I shall make these the front rooms. Rent £1 a week more than I am paying in Doughty Street, but I am tired of a flat so "compact" that my articles find their way into the butter-dish. No butter-dish should be as lordly as that. Am now trying frantically to let the flat at Kensington Gardens Square, which George Mathew has vacated, and the house at Barnet.

June 29 *Saturday.* Tulip made a great show at Sutton Coldfield, winning first and champion cup and beating an animal put three above her at Olympia.

July 1 *Monday.* My brother Edward is in great form these days:

28th June, 1935.

Why do people laugh when I tell them I am reading *The Laws of Peace and War* by Grotius (published in 1625)? They do not laugh if I say I am reading Lord Birkenhead's recent book on International War. ("Very interesting," they say; "sure to become a classic; what a brain!") Yet on nearly every page of Birkenhead's book he sends you back to refer to Grotius as his authority; his own work being an amalgam of the two older masters, merely brought up to date to include the Great War!

Why do people snigger when I tell them I am reading de Tillemont's *Histoire des Empereurs* or his *History of the*

Church during the first six centuries? They only half snigger if I say I am reading *The Decline and Fall.* And yet Gibbon got most of his information from the old Frenchman who died in 1698—and acknowledges the fact!

Why do people guffaw when I tell them I am reading the *Voyage to the Moon,* by Godwin, the model of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Swift? I will throw in Lucian and Voltaire as make-weight. But no one smiles if you say you are reading Jules Verne's wizardry, or the fantastics of Wells!

Why do people shun you on hearing that you read Fontenelle's *Dialogues of the Dead* (1685), the leading idea borrowed avowedly from our old friend Lucian? And Fénelon copies the scheme, and Landor followed suit. But if one reads Landor, one is learned, certainly, but still just within the pale, not as yet a pariah!

Ever yours,

EDWARD.

July 4 Thursday. A filthy two days. Started on Tuesday morning with food poisoning, but insisted on going to Lord's for the S. African Test Match. Chose a seat near the gents' place, where I could be sick ad lib., and freely availed myself. Unfortunately Lord's very draughty, and spent yesterday in an agony of rheumatism in neck and shoulder in addition to the unabated other thing. Sent for doctor last night, who prescribed castor oil. Better this morning, having spent two days wondering if I should ever be able to work again, etc., etc.

I think this ought to be set down. The management at the Regal Cinema announced the other day the personal appearance of a Miss Marcia Marsh, described as "Dillinger's girl friend." Dillinger, it had better be recorded, was America's most notorious gangster last year. Ushered in by the usual hugaboo proper to these occasions, Miss Marsh presented herself as a pleasing vision in flamingo red, silver shoon, and the flossiest possible platinum mop! All that she could be prevailed upon to say, however, after the usual expressions of gratification at being in our midst, was the following which Jock wrote down verbatim: "I was *not* Dillinger's girl-friend—I just went around with him!"

Logically I cannot justify being uppish about this sort of

thing as I spent lunch-time at the Holborn Restaurant to-day poring over the Mahon Case in *The Evening Standard's* series of Avory's Trials. If I must have my drug, why shouldn't people of less education have theirs? By the way Jock tells me that an intimate enemy of mine said the other day: "Of course James likes Southend. It's the one place where he can be sure of finding people commoner than himself!"

July 8 *Monday.* On Saturday took some country friends to *Glamorous Night* at Drury Lane and was more than ever struck by the tawdry music. But that's a silly word, for "tawdry" at least connotes glitter and colour, and Ivor's score is just a dull gumming together of clichés. I except the music of the Gipsy Wedding, which I missed on this second visit as it was so hot that I had to come out. While I was taking the air outside I saw a brand new, burnished, lemon-coloured, exquisitely appointed dust-cart belonging to the L.C.C. This seemed to me to be the perfect image and epitome of the one form of theatre art which the British public really appreciates.

After a week of perfect behaviour in diet, no drink, early bed, etc., yesterday drove slowly to Hastings and back. For lunch had a cutlet, rice-pudding and one whisky and soda. For supper small slice of cold lamb, lettuce salad and one glass of champagne. No more. After supper sat quietly in garden for an hour at the end of which was violently sick, and so on. Doctor says I have picked up a bug, and promises to cure me almost at once. Began by taking me to Lord's, where we sat in the sun watching Cambridge take 300 off some goodish Oxford bowling.

And now here's something in a different key. The post this morning brought me the following skit on Walt Whitman. It is in Brother Edward's best vein and in my view exactly hits off the old ruffian:

Walt Whitman to his Friend

I

O Popanax! My beloved!
Tell me how to greet thee!
Arms a'stretch or a'kimbo,

Ear taut to the ground for the echo of footsteps,
  Squirrel-like, panting, awaiting;
Or more manly and reserved,
In accordance with common decency?
  (I can do it either way.)
    O Popanax, tell me how to greet thee!

II

    O Popanax! My beloved!
  Tell me how to woo thee!
Shall I caress thee as the porpoises churn the water
  Till they grow tired?
Wilt thou strip and race with me on the wave-beleaguered sands,
Or must I tarry, till the whippoorwill cries
  Orchestrally in Alabama,
Before I cling to thee—we two alone—
  Acrobatically performing?
  (You must wait—you see I am not ready!)
    O Popanax! Shall I put it in writing?

III

    O Popanax! My beloved!
  Tell me how to love thee!
I have heard the march of Mohawks;
  (In Longfellow—the old curmudgeon—
  Or was it before the French Revolution?)
I have drummed taps upon Americanos' bums;
(Goethe boasted he did something of the sort on his Italian
    Journey—
You can never be sure of these Germans!)
I have seen Walden's woods hatchet-bent
  To the muscular form;
I have heard sea-gulls crying when the moon was low;
I have sat as nurse by side of bed-racked soldiers,
  Comforting them with a kiss (purely maternal, I would not
    hurt them)
  And taken their last Envoi
  To their grandmothers;
But never have I met the absolute
      "Yes."
  Shall I divine it
  Among your moustachios?

E. A.

July 13 *Saturday.* Southend again, after an agitated week. First I was staggered to find how bad my article on Gielgud's *Noah* was. All about my food-poisoning. But at least it wasn't pretentious, and I had the courage to resist this quotation from the end of *Manette Salomon*:

Et parfois, dans ce jour du commencement de la journée, dans ces heures légères, dans cette lumière qui boit la rosée, dans cette fraîcheur innocente du matin, dans ces jeunes clartés qui semblent rapporter à la terre l'enfance du monde et ses premiers soleils, dans ce bleu du ciel naissant où l'oiseau sort de l'étoile, dans la tendresse verte de mai, dans la solitude des allées sans public, au milieu de ces cabanes de bois qui font songer à la primitive maison de l'humanité, au milieu de cet univers d'animaux familiers et confiants comme sur une terre divine encore, l'ancien Bohème revit des joies d'Éden, et il s'élève en lui, presque célestement, comme un peu de la félicité du premier homme en face de la Nature vierge.

" Cet univers d'animaux familiers et confiants "—the appositeness of this to Obey's play is heavenly. But an article to carry this would have to be up to Charles Morgan at his best, and I wasn't well enough to make the attempt. So I sacrificed the quotation, and thereby deserve a pat on the back from Sentimental Tommy.

On Wednesday went to the Great Yorkshire Show at Sheffield, and on returning bought Tudor Rose's first foal by Buckley Courage. Shall call it Rose Knight.

I have to-day written a circular letter to every member of the Council of the Hackney Horse Society, demanding the issue of a Memorandum defining a judge's duties. Whether it is hackneys or mice or shrimps there will always be judges who " lean " to this or that exhibitor. In the Hackney world the " leaners " are of three kinds. A typical example of the first kind is A., in private life a wholesale dealer in, say dustbins. A., judging the harness classes at the Royal Loamshire, recognises an animal belonging to B., the leading South American exporter of sanitary goods, and from whom is due just about this time the annual order of a thousand gross of bins. A. can see B. grinning at him from the stand, or ostentatiously looking the other way, which comes to the same thing. Now B.'s horse is pretty good, and it's a toss-up between it and an animal belonging to say, a dentist at Kettering. Isn't

Rose Knight
Photograph by the Author

it only human nature to expect that in a hundred tosses the coin will come down in B.'s favour exactly one hundred times? At the next show A. is the exhibitor and B. the judge. B. has placed his order, A. has delivered the adjuncts to sanitation, and B., a little pressed for cash, could do with a month more credit. Isn't it only to be expected that the animal belonging to the Kettering dentist will once more have to be content with second place?

The second kind of "leaner" is your dealer, X. X. buys a useless animal from a farmer for perhaps a couple of hundred pounds and sells it to Y., a wealthy amateur, for say £800. All well and good. Three months elapse and X., judging at the Great Gravelshire, is horrified when Y. comes up to him with a smile extending from ear to ear.

X. (*grasping his nettle*). How's the horse?

Y. In fine fettle. He should have an easy job to-day.

X. (*temporising*). Yes?

Y. (*pinning him to it*). Happy Mug's got nothing against him except Smash Hit.

X. (*pretending not to have heard of very nearly the best animal in the country*). Smash Hit?

Y. Smash Hit. The chestnut mare that was sold at young Beamend's sale last month.

X. (*covering up in advance*). I remember; they tell me she's pretty useful.

Y. My dear fellow, she only cost eighty quid, and you know what I gave you for Happy Mug! (*Actually* Y. *speaks only the first half of this sentence; it is his eyebrows which complete it.*)

X. Well, so long. By the way I've got my eye on a smartish pony . . .

Y. (*interrupting*). After the class, old boy, after the class. I can't think of anything till Happy Mug's fate is sealed.

(*H. M.'s fate isn't sealed; it is Smash Hit which must put off her smashing and hitting until another day. Next week that smart pony known as Hot and Bothered finds a new home.*)

A third type of "leaner" is the judge who, being incompetent and knowing it, dares not trust his own judgment and must therefore place the animals brought in front of him as they have been placed before. But as this is something of a

feat of memory he finds it simpler to go by the owners' reputation for winning. M. has a horse in the class—for this type of judge knows all the coachmen by heart—and as M. has just won the championship at Richmond and Olympia there can be no harm in his winning here. Sometimes this results in a howling mess, as when some music-teacher from Battersea asks M.'s coachman as a favour to drive his sorry nag. The great whip obligingly agrees, whereupon the fool of a judge, seeing M.'s man " up," jumps to the conclusion that the horse belongs to M. And for the first and last time in his life the music-teacher from Battersea wins first prize. This type of leaner has prompted me to a variant of Belloc's wicked little rhyme:

> It's unadulterated fudge
> To say you've bribed a Hackney judge.
> For seeing what the bloke will do
> Unbribed—there's no occasion to.

These three types of judges can, however, always be avoided. Personally I should not dream of showing under any one of them, and never have done.

July 18 *Thursday.* On Tuesday had one of my "black-outs" which have not troubled me for months. Supped at the Savoy with lovely Mrs. Calthrop, the stage-designer, and the equally likeable Lionel Fielden, just off to India as head of the local B.B.C. (Can anything so vast as India be described as " local " ?) Cheered up a little when a witty young man whose name I did not catch told how recently he had lunched next to Lady A., that courageous incarnation of perpetual youth and whose sunny toilettes—" bride-cake, bric-à-brac and basket-work in equal proportions "—are the last remaining echo of the 'nineties. " Finding a dull spot on her corsage, she snatched the gold foil from a champagne bottle and pinned it on ! " I felt better after this.

July 19 *Friday.* Sent back-word about the flat near Lord's. Clause in lease whereby landlady or any of her other tenants, even during permitted hours, had power to veto whatever I might be playing on piano, gramophone,

or loud speaker. Returned lease with flea in lawyer's ear. Made offer for house in Hampstead. Jack Hawkins, the actor, is my rival here.

July 20 *Saturday.* Lovely drive to Swansea yesterday—Reading, Gloucester, Chepstow and so on. Stayed at Queen's Hotel, Cardiff. Good cooking, excellent beds, agreeable attendance, in a word *le vrai confort moderne*. The show was in Singleton Park, a wooded dell open on one side to the sea and the Mumbles—a veritable Valley of Avilion. Tulip made an exquisite show and got second, which is what I expected. After all the horse which beat her was on his own dunghill and belonged to my host, a charming man recovering from a long illness and sitting propped up in a car. I don't mind this sort of thing now and again. The difference between to-day's winner and Tulip is the difference between the overture to *Rienzi* and that of *Figaro*. The one is a swaggering, public-house bully saying: "Come out of the bloody road!" The other is a great lady entering a drawing-room. Made a good Welsh speech at the luncheon—all about Lord Camrose and Mrs. Siddons and Edith Evans and Emlyn Williams and Jimmy Wilde and Charles Morgan and Hilda Vaughan and Eiluned Lewis and Dilys Powell and Trevor Wignall, and every other Welsh celebrity I could think of. Said it was vulgar always to want to be first. The thing was to show an exquisite animal. If one couldn't be Snowdon, one would put up with being Cader Idris or even Plinlimmon. So how could I get in a paddy about being second? Grand drive home through Brecon.

July 22 *Monday.* Sumptuous day of wind, nerves, asthma, etc., ending with the doctor coming at two in the morning to give an adrenalin injection.

July 23 *Tuesday.* Absurdly weak, and have to sacrifice the Royal Welsh Show at Haverfordwest to which I have been immensely looking forward. Instead motor to Southend and try a few shots with the new driver, brassie and spoon Winsor has been making for me. One shot with brassie

220 yards uphill against wind: pretty good for man *in extremis*. After which nothing satisfies me but must seek out local doctor to ask if really am *in extremis*. Find delightful boy, a locum, with a bright, stove-like smile like Moray McLaren.

DOCTOR. What's wrong?

J. A. Funk.

DOCTOR. Let's just run you over. (*Does so and begins to laugh.*)

J. A. What's funny?

DOCTOR. You haven't half got an aortic lesion. I could hear it a mile off!

J. A. It's compensating, isn't it?

DOCTOR. It's compensating all right. But it's a hell of a lesion! I'm not much of a doctor. Only two years in practice, as a matter of fact, but I should have recognised your trouble on my first day at the hospital.

J. A. But it's not my heart that's worrying me. I know all about that.

DOCTOR (*contrite*). Sorry. What *is* wrong?

J. A. Sheer funk. Think I'm going to drop down in my tracks.

DOCTOR. When?

J. A. Now. Any time.

DOCTOR. Not with that heart you won't. You'll have lots of warning. Swelled ankles, easily tired, out of puff, all sorts of things. In the meantime don't play golf in the sun.

J. A. I don't. I play it damn well in the shade.

DOCTOR. Ah, Rugby's my game. (*Discussion about merits of both games considered as rivals.*)

J. A. (*resuming*). What about my stomach?

DOCTOR. Oh, just jiggered up generally. Can't help it with that heart. I'll give you a sleeping draught and a nerve tonic, and if they don't put you right I've been taught wrong!

July 24 *Wednesday.* J. A. doesn't take either, sleeps like a log and wakes to go round Thorpe Bay (16 holes) in 66 gross. Sixteen holes only because J. A. cuts out

two in the middle through fear of over-tiring himself. What bilge Cicero and Charles Morgan write about the compensations of old age!

See charming bungalow at Thorpe Bay and decide to make offer. This means cancelling offer for house in Hampstead. Do so. The agent who shows me round the bungalow is pure Dickens. Calls me "friend," and when I ask whether Thorpe Bay isn't a bit damp in winter—when I shall lock up the house—replies "Damp? Not a bit of it. My father, who had arterio-sclerosis, was nine years in bed in the same Avenue!" He ends by referring me to a colleague "who has the monotony of bungalows in Thorpe Bay!"

No news from Haverfordwest!

July 25 *Thursday.* Albert 'phones to say Tulip made the greatest show of her life yesterday, putting up terrific battle with Nanette, who though winning was not giving her best show. Anyhow this show appears to have restored Tulip's fair fame. The Swansea winner? He didn't show up, perhaps preferring to chew the cud of unwrested laurels.

July 29 *Monday.* Have let the flat in Kensington Gardens Square and the house at Barnet, given notice to leave Doughty Street, and taken a flat at Belsize Park and a bungalow at Thorpe Bay.

Worsley Show on Saturday. Tulip third and should have been second, but Ego romped home in the novice class, everybody liking him immensely and telling me he is the best horse I ever owned. I don't know how much altitude there was in Hamlet's chopine, but Ego now only wants the thickness of a boot-sole to take him out of the pony class and put him among the big horses.

Spent the week-end with Brother Mycroft, who was at his most amiable.

Plucked up sufficient courage this morning to get Jock to sack the chauffeur! The young man may be *sans reproche* as a driver, but for some weeks I have not been *sans peur* as a

passenger. I am always having to nod apology to other road-users. Jock reports that this professed bachelor took his dismissal very well, saying that he didn't mind for himself but he was sorry *on account of his wife and two kids.* Peters, always at his cheeriest in time of trouble, told me at lunch that all chauffeurs calling themselves single are married, whereas the " married couples " who go as butler and cook have never seen each other till they meet at the registry office.

July 30 *Tuesday.* Every night at six o'clock the Doughty Street scene changes entirely. Negroes emerge from their residential club opposite, while stable-boys from the mews round the corner exercise their horses by racing up and down the full length of the street, from Mecklenburgh Square to Gray's Inn Road. The result is pure film, half Harlem and half cowboy. Am half-sorry I am leaving.

August 2 *Friday.* Rang up the Kentish Town Labour Bureau, and informed no chauffeurs on books. I have advertised in *The Daily Telegraph* and received twenty wildly unsuitable replies, including one from a fellow whose unique recommendation was that he is a first-class rifle-shot ! I think I shall have to imitate a friend of mine who once advertised his house: " This highly undesirable residence with all its hideous appurtenances miles from anywhere and without view, airless and draughty, poky and rambling, with every old-world inconvenience and no sanitation has THIS to recommend it—it is DIRT-CHEAP." The result was that enquiries poured in, and a really delightful house that nobody would have looked at if it had been advertised in glowing colours was sold in forty-eight hours. Shall therefore insert:

> Wanted: Incompetent, careless chauffeur, unable valet or wait at table, no references, licence handsomely endorsed, educated Borstal, last position Wormwood Scrubs, surly and disobliging, heavy smoker and total imbiber, eleven children, married when suited. Genteel crook preferred, robber without violence not entertained.

The annoying thing about this Southend hotel, where I propose to be in residence for a month, is that from breakfast-table or writing-desk to nearest lavatory is 100 yards or thereabouts. (Arnold Bennett would have chronicled this.) In all other respects the hotel is ideal, and it has a view which Canaletto would have painted.

My failure with that old harridan, *Time and Tide*, is complete. Have courted, and done my best to make conquest of Sylvia Lynd, Vera Brittain, and Viola Garvin, but alas all to no purpose ! Individually they are dears, together they are the Medusa. And I, in print at any rate, appear to be Anathema. Says Medusa this week:

> Without malice, I think I may say that there are many who dislike Mr. Agate as a critic and who cannot stomach his manner of false heartiness or the mess of, so to speak, literary boiled beef and carrots which he places on the bill of fare every Sunday.

This makes me want to imitate Jonathan Wild's young woman who visited him in prison to ask: " Why bitch, Mr. Wild ? Why bitch ? " Why "*false* heartiness " ? Is this the result of subduing my lion's roar to Bottom's sucking-dove quality ? By the way Phyllis Neilson-Terry is still peacocking it as Oberon. I remember last season how Oberon had to make exit round the bend of one of those discreet little paths which, in public parks, disappear into shrubberies. First the King of the Fairies vanished and then, like a serpent, his long and trailing cloak started to negotiate the bend. The man with me, a motor-fan, said in a stage-whisper: " He won't do it unless he reverses ! "

By the way, in a life of Betterton published in 1710 I read yesterday this delightful sentence: " Nor was there much of Comedy known before the learned Ben Jonson, for no Man can allow any of Shakespeare's Comedies except the *Merry Wives of Windsor*."

Distressed because the City of Manchester has written begging the MS. of *Responsibility* and I destroyed it years ago !

Went round Thorpe Bay last night in 76. Going to bed discover Fred has forgotten the asthma cigarettes. Me in a towering rage and Fred tearfully protesting. Asthma attack repelled by strong effort of will and finally get to sleep. Am wakened an hour later by Fred who has roused local apothecary by saying he will pay his poverty and not his will: "I shouted that if he didn't come down and serve me I would knock his block off!" To please Fred, dancing round the room like some primeval elephant in a jungle-story, I smoke the cigarette which I no longer need. Suddenly Fred stops galumphing to probe into toe of bedroom-slipper, where, sure enough, the missing packet is ensconced.

August 3 *Saturday.* Bout of wind and panic started at midday and lasted till ten at night. Tried every known remedy, physical and spiritual, without effect. Motored to Creeksea and actually find this very desolate spot on the Essex coast which might be part of an early Conrad story. Watched a barge with brown sails tack against the tide, come to anchor and make fast almost within hailing distance. But even that didn't lift the depression which, however, just about bed-time unaccountably cleared. The only measure I can give of these attacks is to say that the wretchedness would not be increased by a wire saying Tulip had dropped down dead, or lightened by the news that somebody had left me a fortune. Obviously I cannot sit in a theatre in that state, and as it is unlikely I shall ever come out of that state what is to become of me? Answer: Matches and the street-corner. Unless, of course, I die the same night. And so on and so forth. No other complaint or illness affects me in this way of paralysing the will.

In the meantime sent round to the Labour Exchange for a chauffeur-handyman. Only three turned up, all the others having gone away for the August Bank Holiday! One was patronising, another was your obvious rolling-stone, married but not living with his wife. The third was an orphan, a waif and stray from Durham, father killed in the war, had always lived with his granny. No other relatives except "lots of

aunties." Wages? Would take anything, and in addition put up with any conditions of living, hours, work, etc. This, of course, always gets more out of me than the cleverest bargaining, and the Orfling starts on Tuesday.

August 4 Sunday. Much better to-day, largely owing to the inspiration of Turkey rhubarb, the friend of my youth. Motored to Clacton, my stand-by when I was ill in 1928. This is the best air in the world. See by the papers that John Tilley is dead. I genuinely feel this. Tilley's buffoonery sprang from his naïve and fumbling mind. It was that timidity, of which every man in his heart of hearts knows something, making itself vocal, and we all knew kinship with it. An old Scotch caddie, when I asked him what he thought of the relative merits of young Tom Morris and Bobby Jones, answered sternly and reprovingly: "Baith o' them played pairfect gowf." Similarly I never worried about the relative merits of John Tilley and Gillie Potter. Both have tickled me infinitely, and there is no more to be said. Even the staidest of the Sunday papers records that at one period Tilley was a traveller in moth-proof paper-bags! It was exactly this sort of thing with which he would convulse a house.

August 5 Monday. In eighteen hundred and heaven knows what Villiers de l'Isle-Adam wrote a Cruel Story entitled *L'Affichage Céleste*. This was about "le grand vulgarisateur," to wit the plan to utilise the sky for advertising:

> Il suffit de réfléchir, un tant soit peu, pour concevoir les résultats de cette ingénieuse invention. Ne serait-ce pas de quoi étonner la Grande Ourse elle-même, si, soudainement, surgissait, entre ses pattes sublimes, cette annonce inquiétante: *Faut-il des corsets, oui, ou non?*

To-night, on the golf-links and against the setting sun, I saw an aeroplane with the streamer: "Eat Sharp's Mickey Mouse Toffee!"

To-day at lunch somebody asked how far Thorpe Bay was

from Belsize Park. Before I could answer Leo Pavia said: "About the same distance as from Dan to Beersheba, as James will jolly well find out! The women stand at their front-doors and scream invitations to Bridge. 'Vot conventions do you play, and vot stakes?'"

I wish, when I was seedy the other day and had decided I should never be able to work again, I had bethought me of this immortal and very little known plaint of Ben Jonson. I had quite forgotten this, if indeed I ever knew it:

TO THE LORD HIGH TREASURER

MY LORD,
Poor wretched States, prest by extremities,
Are fain to seek for succours and supplies
Of Princes' aids, or good men's charities.

Disease the Enemy, and his engineers,
Want, with the rest of his conceal'd compeers,
Have cast a trench about me, now five years,

And made those strong approaches by false brays,
Redouts, half-moons, horn-works, and such close ways,
The Muse not peeps out, one of hundred days,

But lies block'd up, and straiten'd, narrow'd in,
Fix'd to the bed and boards, unlike to win
Health, or scarce breath, as she had never been;

Unless some saving honour of the Crown,
Dare think it, to relieve, no less renown,
A Bed-rid Wit, than a Besieged Town.

This is a first-class example of the sort of thing in which my scholarship, in comparison with Ivor Brown's and Charles Morgan's, is so woefully to seek. By the way I left Malvern to George Bishop, who dotes on Shaw and his plays, whereas I dote on G. B. S., the dramatic critic and preface-writer. In the theatre his plays have nearly always bored me measurelessly, and I will not be so rude to this Grand Old Man as to tell him so to his face. If he should die before me I am long resolved to leave his obituary to Desmond and George, who will both do him proud. I refuse to be the stinking fly in that most precious ointment. As I write a motor-smash happens beneath my window and one of the cars turns over. I wish these things wouldn't upset, and so upset me!

August 6 Tuesday. Behold me, the classical dyspeptic, munching charcoal biscuits in a new suit of duck! Jock says I look like a black and white drawing by Beardsley. A note in the biscuit tin says: "These Charcoal Biscuits sometimes develop a greyish bloom. This is quite harmless." What I object to is the greyish bloom which sometimes develops on me. This is quite harmful.

August 7 Wednesday. Great day of house-furnishing, etc. Registered a solemn vow that setting up the bungalow should not cost more than £100. This is the result.

	£	s.	d.
Furniture for lounge hall, work-room, kitchen, my bed-room, chauffeur's room and Fred's ingeniously devised bed-scullery . .	92	16	4
Curtains for ditto	13	10	6
Lino for ditto	9	15	0
One carpet.	5	19	6
Sheets, blankets, towels, etc. . . .	10	16	6
Pots and pans, cutlery, china, glass, etc. .	9	10	4
Electric lamps, shades, etc. . . .	7	9	0
Dusters, etc.	1	0	0
Removal expenses	3	5	0
Odd expenses, tips, etc.	2	0	0
Reserve for nails, string, toilet-rolls, soap, yard-brush, and Things People Tell Me I Shall Want	5	0	0
	£161	2	2

Well, I don't think that's a bad effort, especially in view of the fact that all the stuff is good, solid, and plain, and to-day plainness costs money.

August 8 Thursday. Orfling departs. Nice child, but no notion of driving. Temporary chauffeur, an ex-Petty-Officer, makes a remark which, on one of my bad days, I should find discouraging. Seeing me cock an eye at a lugubrious Daimler he says: "They use 'em for black work. It's an 'earse!"

August 9 *Friday.* " Change and decay in all around I see," runs the old hymn. This does not apply to first-nighters, in whom there is only decay.

August 10 *Saturday.* George Mathew arrives from London with a story of having seen printed across a shop front: " What You Don't See In The Window Please Step Inside." One of the great points about George is that you can trust him to spot this sort of thing and to remember it.

August 11 *Sunday.* Nothing that I know of can compare with the bosoms of those burnished doves which are Clacton's landladies. They live in houses coloured to match, little houses whose façades have all the chromatic delight of lemon pudding, raspberry sauce, and delicate sweets in blue and green. Stand on that grassy verge which keeps the ocean at arm's length and you have choice of two pleasures. Face east and you behold " little ships on the crumpled sea, sailing so grand." Face west and you watch young hopeful, aged six, doing justice to his father's wholly lamentable bowling. The probability is that you will combine both joys and simultaneously scan the horizon and with the back of your pants intercept young hopeful's boundary hit. But you cannot spend the whole day interrupting other people's games. There are two holes on the links at Clacton which for me hold the maximum of golfing enchantment. One is, superficially considered, a sufficiently common-place affair—an iron shot to an unguarded green. Yet this green nestles at the foot of a martello tower, built to repel our enemies. And he is a poor Englishman who, taking his third putt in its shade, does not bethink him of Drake and the good principle of finishing one game before you begin another. The second never-to-be-forgotten hole comes towards the end of the round, when, if you are playing at the right time of day, you drive straight into the sunset and each and every one of your shots to that distant green perforce becomes an arrow of gold.

The hub of Clacton is its pier. Walk to the end of this,

and there, like as not, you will find the *Laguna Belle*, once known as the *Southend Belle*, and with a history of heroic service in the Dardanelles. She has just brought passengers from London—three glad hours, and it seems not an hour of that supreme and supernal joy which, Swinburne tells us, revives in remembrance the sea-bird's heart in a boy. But the great poet said nothing of the supreme and supernal melancholy if it is the return journey from Clacton you are making, and the joys are being left behind. This is a voyage which I, personally, never make, for it would take me past Southend, to which I am wedded. Instead, I toddle home by road, by Colchester and Chelmsford, and the lovely unexpected village of Battlesbridge, where, suddenly, in the middle of the inland landscape, arise the masts and brown, close-furled sails of some sea-and-river-going barge. For my flirtation with Clacton must be a daytime affair. To Southend I am wedded, and I must sleep at home.

August 13 *Tuesday.* My holidays have your Chinese puzzle beaten to a frazzle. Technically I am on holiday from the beginning of last week till September 8, when my *S.T.* articles start again. But as nobody else thinks I need a rest I must in three days and before I can go away turn out sixteen articles averaging 1,200 words. As I *must* get away—the other day I nearly conked out and had to chuck an exciting four-ball at the 9th hole—and as Jock is off abroad for a fortnight, this has meant all hands to the pumps. I have now no work to do until August 26th, except a couple of *D.E.* book articles. Set out, then, from Thorpe Bay, with a fairly free mind, George Mathew, lots of luggage, a new chauffeur hailing agreeably from Sussex, and Tommy Hanson, a friendly Lancashire soul and next to Fred the best valet-companion-nurse and general cheerer-up I know. Something of a retinue, though less than that with which the Earl of Blessington travelled Europe, and if I'm ill Tommy and not George Mathew will have to bear the brunt of it. In the meantime have arranged for Fred Leigh to have his missus and kids at the bungalow. Fred's emotion on being told

he could send for his encumbrances was embarrassing—like a jelly-fish in tears. Lunched at Chelmsford, and then good run through to Doncaster, where I saw a newspaper placard: "Death of a Yorkshire Poet," and found it was William Watson. George professing considerable admiration, I challenged him to repeat some of Watson's stuff, which he did on the instant. With me W. W. was a blind spot associated with the Boer War, Armenian atrocities and so forth. I always thought of him as a political poet. As the apple of *The Manchester Guardian's* eye he could, of course, never be really popular. In his prime, such things as the Nazis' treatment of the Jews and Mussolini's attitude to the dear Abyssinians would have been food for a dozen burning sonnets in *The Times*. Then to Bradford where the bill for a mingy supper at which we drank whisky, three bedrooms, Tommy and the chauffeur sharing, and four breakfasts, was over four pounds! Me protesting they knocked off ten bob, but as this amount went in tips it follows that a small party can't spend a night in a hole like Bradford under the best part of a fiver.

August 14 *Wednesday.* Enormously impressed with Haworth Parsonage—the only place of its kind which has not disappointed me. The day was dressed to suit, sombre and cheerless, and the brow on which the house stands was wind-swept and forbidding. The house is large enough to have permitted all that secrecy of composition. I was struck, as always on such occasions, by the deadness of it all. This actual table, that very chair—these accentuate the physical aspect of death. The Brontës were far, far deader after I had seen their relics than they seemed before. With an effort I put this thought away and took to noting the good taste of everything they handled, the elegance of their china, dresses, shawls, trinkets, and small possessions. Furious to find that modern carelessness has penetrated even here: somebody's book called *Bride of Quietness* has a typewritten label calling it *Bride of Quiteness*. Peering at and poring over some of Branwell's letters, I got the impression that he might easily have been the master-spirit. Of all the quartet he seemed to be the

least dead; I had the feeling that something of him might still stir in that house. The church, too, was impressive. Emily and Charlotte are buried by the chancel—Anne lies on the hill-side at Scarborough—and as one bent down to read the brass tablet the silence of the grave seemed to make itself heard. It is right that these two should be here, at Keighley where they belong, and not in any busier part of the world. I think I should have bunthed at this point if I had not recalled the sternly exhilarating lines of another Emily:

> Ample make this bed.
> Make this bed with awe;
> In it wait till judgment break
> Excellent and fair.
>
> Be its mattress straight,
> Be its pillow round;
> Let no sunrise' yellow noise
> Interrupt this ground.

I have never seen any reference to the odd circumstance of the Brontë parents' double denial of their offspring, the mother's forced because she died when Charlotte was five, and the father's wilful because to the end he believed himself to be the Brontë who counted. The chauffeur had never heard of the sisters, and I told George we must make allowances: "Neither Charlotte nor Emily would have made head or tail of the internal combustion engine." George said, "Rubbish! They *were* internal combustion engines!"

August 15 *Thursday.* Ego carried all, or very nearly all, before him at Bingley yesterday, winning the novice class and reserve for champion cup. Tulip third in her class. Came on to Bowness-on-Windermere in the evening.

Decided this morning to find out how crocked I am by trying an old walk. To Keswick, and after lunch in Borrowdale took the car as far as Seathwaite. Road-side colloquy with miner who had injured a hand in the Honister quarries and with the other one was fondling a tame fox. He said we could do Esk Hause "in about an hour." Actually it took two hours of steady going by the Grain Ghyll route in the grandest possible conditions of high cloud and magnificently

cool breeze. Visibility very good indeed and the view perfect. To my great relief I found I was fresher on reaching the plateau, 2,400 feet, than I was at starting; the climb hadn't taken more out of me than it did ten years ago. George was more puffed than I was ! We had Tommy and the chauffeur with us, and they kept up an endless succession of japes and buffooneries, imitations of guerilla warfare, sniping from behind rocks and telling us they had got us covered—all in the manner of fourteen-year-old schoolboys, or the way our lads behaved in the trenches. (Tommy's brother ran away from school at sixteen to enlist in the East Lancashires, went to France, had one leave, went back and was killed at the age of seventeen.) The whole walk took 3½ hours and at its conclusion we sat down to a terrific farm-house tea for which the absurdly small charge of one-and-eightpence each was made.

August 16 *Friday.* A wet day. No ill effects from the climb. Motored to Keswick and had a long stare at Abraham's shop-window. Photo of Hugh Walpole teaching pet dog to sit up and beg does not decide question as to which is the more pleased ! Also one of Hugh with Jack Priestley in Hugh's garden entitled " The Good Companions." Bought a large photo of Derwentwater in Spring which I shall hang and probably get to hate. The Present-from-Blackpool mania is either born in one or it isn't, and if it is it's no use trying to eradicate it. Then Coniston, Broughton and Seascale where I last stayed as a boy after a huge trudge from Rosthwaite via Green Knotts, Brandreth, Great Gable, Scawfell and Scawfell Pike, carrying a stand camera with plates and tripod. But that was forty years ago. Good lunch. Ordered toast, and moon-faced waiter appearing not to understand, I said snappily: " Bread. You hold it to the fire ! " Moon-faced waiter ruminated, and after a time said: " How close ? " Took an age to find Wastwater, when the afternoon had become too misty to see anything. Home via Whinlatter Pass. Letter from Jock entirely incoherent and pleading as excuse " je viens de voir ce gigantesque Tulip Time," and saying he is not forwarding a medal which has come for Tulip as he

does not suppose I want to wear it while yachting on Windermere. In the evening Tommy and the chauffeur invited us to accompany them to the local cinema, which George gracefully did, me being busy with the Diary. Two minutes of a very good recording of Mozart's " Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" made the chauffeur squirm in his seat as though in pain, and after three minutes he turned to George and said, " Gawd, it gives yer the guts' ache, don't it ? " I approve. I should hate to have a chauffeur with the Glyndebourne complex.

August 17 *Saturday.* Another damp morning. Spent it on the Diary and reading the week's news. *The Times* has decided that the successor to Marie Lloyd is Gracie Fields ! But can chalk ever be the successor to cheese ? I suppose there is common ground of a sort in Gracie's outspoken mill-hands and Marie's confidential harridans. But the ruins Cromwell knocked abaht a bit were Marie's stand-by in decline. In her heyday her note was the Wink at Midnight, which Gracie could not compass if she studied for a thousand years. London impudence and Lancashire cheek are poles apart, and I am surprised the writer in *The Times* does not see this.

In the afternoon it cleared up in the way it has in the Lakes. Motored to Kendal and over Shap to Penrith, where I bought a Staffordshire " King John signing Magna Charta," and resisted a witch ball despite the shopkeeper's repeated statement that it was of better quality and more refined colour than one purchased by the Queen last week and another secured by Gladys Cooper a month ago. Spent half-an-hour on the Ullswater shore playing ducks and drakes in glorious sunshine and childishly happy. Lake and mountains on their best behaviour and just like a sentimental picture of them, complete with a couple of white-winged yachts and one with sails of pure geranium. Also lashings of purple heather and the coyest of rainbows. The perfect oleograph and crying out to be used as a setting for a play by Dodie Smith ! Then tea at the very fine Ullswater Hotel. Home by Troutbeck. This is the right way to do Ullswater, as you have the hills before you all the time instead of behind.

In the evening spent an hour on the promenade, listening to a crazy band—flute, 'cello, double-bass, piano, drums and three first violins, " which are really two as Mr. B—— spends most of the time collecting." Soldier Songs, Old Favourites, the "Blue Danube," all rendered in that tinkle whose thinness, half-gay and half-sad, has all the heart-ache of a holiday. When it got dark the performance came to an end, as this was not a band to play by heart and it takes a lot of threepences to run to lighting arrangements. At one moment I called George's attention to an overpowering scent of talcum powder, and he said: " You utter ass ! It's real carnations." And I then realised that there were thousands of them fringing the promenade, stealing and giving odour, as Orsino says, for all they were worth. Presently we fell to reciting Gray's Elegy, line and line about, but did not get as far as we thought we should. The fellow who begins has the stiff end of the job, for he has to remember the changes of subject. After a while George suddenly said: " That's enough of poetry. Do you know what the old Scotch-woman said when asked her opinion of modern dancing ? " I said no and George told me : " She said ' I hae seen many a twa dogs hae a bucket o' cauld water thrown ower them for less than that ! ' "

A modest supper and soberly to our couches. Tommy and chauffeur had asked and obtained leave to disport themselves at a dance of local Corydons and Phyllises, where they intend to pose as a couple of London gigolos.

August 18 *Sunday.* Round the Langdales in the morning and this concludes our Lakes visit. We have seen in four days that which, when I was a boy, would have taken a month. The distances are not big, as motor-distances go, but they were vast in the old horse days. As a matter of interest let me jot them down:

Thursday	Esk Hause	64 miles
Friday	Wastwater	137 „
Saturday	Ullswater	86 „
Sunday	Langdales	30 „

These are the speedometer readings for each day, starting from Windermere. Roughly 300 miles.

The thing which struck me most was the number of hikers and their excellent behaviour. They are as much superior to the London sort as the Lakeland motor-driver is to the Cockney hog. George was most struck by the paucity of wireless. In the whole of the Seascale and Eskdale district we saw one aerial, and one only. We debated endlessly, of course, about such things as the relativity of beauty. Will Windermere be lovelier than, say Wigan, when after the next war there is nobody left alive to register that loveliness? To replace the Sunday church service George has the idea of an observatory service, the congregation to be provided with telescopes and to refresh its soul with the sense of Man's infinite unimportance.

G. M. Cows are happiest. To them grass is cud and cud is grass.

J. A. That is all they know, and all they need to know.

Lunched with my oldest friend. But literally oldest, for Sarah Aspland is ninety-two. She is the mother of the writer of the first letter in *Ego*, and has been good to me all my life. My father was her husband's agent in the cotton business. Arthur Aspland, who died thirty years ago, was another Père Grandet, with a lavish generosity in place of miserliness. His wife is drawn to Balzac's scale also; in a time of bad trade she counselled her husband to rip the old machinery out of the mill and put in new. "It'll cost £30,000!" the mill-owner pretended to object, and his wife said sharply: "Well, we've got it, haven't we?" "No," fibbed the husband. "Then go and get it," came the reply. "Or else I will!" And the story goes that next day Sarah Aspland marched into the bank and came out with an unlimited credit. I am not going to say that this valiant, not to say tough, old lady was ever easy to get on with. All her life she has had tremendous will-power and has used it. She is a mistress of asperity, and has never stood nonsense. In manner as tart as a crab-apple, at heart she is as sweet as a nut. When I walked into the drawing-room at

Windlass Beck to-day she received me in the grand manner: *it was a reception.* She reminded me of Bernhardt in her elegance and antique coquetry, while her stick, ruff and pose had something of Queen Elizabeth. She ate a good lunch—melon, roast lamb (two helpings), plum fool and junket, with a glass of Graves—and her brain is as unimpaired as her digestion. " What I want to know is not what vast sums you're making, James, but how much less you're spending." And so on, demolishing my plea that the horses pay their way: " You forget I've kept horses." A little deaf, but that's all. A crystal-clear memory, the intellectual vigour of her best years, and a Sarah Battle-like addiction to contract, which she plays well. A great Victorian.

After lunch called on Brook Aspland, her son, and paid my respects to his grand-children aged twelve, ten, eight and six. " Like Ibsen's plays, one every two years," I pointed out to Peggy Snow, their mother, who frowned and said the simile was too literary. So I had to remind Peggy that the first time I saw her she was the same size and colour as a boiled lobster. The children thought this very funny.

Came on to St. Annes-on-Sea.

August 19 *Monday.* Even on holiday I cannot get away from Fleet Street. One day last week I saw a heading: " War May Have Ended in 1914." It is only fair to say that the inability to distinguish between " may " and " might " is general to-day and not journalistic only.

In *The Times* Gordon Craig harps on an old string. The Theatre is to be reformed by some god-like super-manager who shall RUN THE WHOLE SHOW:

> And to this end he depends first of all on those closest assistants, his *régisseurs*, A., B., C., D., E.; and then on those great friends, his playwrights, A., B., C., A., B.—or A. alone, if he will. Then on those good fellows, the highly-skilled actors and actresses. Then those excellent craftsmen, the scenic painters, the stage carpenters, the costumiers. And with all these under his direction, he knows that he can order and re-order, arrange and re-arrange that tangled dramatic art until the many thousands who come

to his house—i.e. his theatre—come very quickly and with a growing attention and an increasing silence . . . watching and listening to that which is to take place—recognizing the revival and being revived through it. But the reform that this man can achieve cannot begin until . . .

I do not think that until *what* matters. Craig has been until-ing ever since I can remember!

August 22 *Thursday.* Letter from Jock saying:

It is excellent that I am empowered to be so helpful: an arrangement known to the vegetable world—I seem to remember—as symbiosis. Any slight frigidity in this prose may be put down to the facts (a) that London is panting under a heat-wave, and (b) that your letter to me this morning was about as impersonal as if it had been directly addressed to your typewriter. But then I suppose I have come greatly to resemble that jaded machine.

Good show at Marton near Blackpool yesterday. Ego won two firsts and novice champion cup. Everybody, including all judges, likes this noble horse. I hear on all sides that if he will grow another two inches he is a world-beater. Tulip second in her class. Gave Albert dinner at the Metropole and afterwards to *White Horse Inn* whose tunes are as captivating as ever. The most remarkable thing in Blackpool is not the view *from*, but the view *in* the Tower—to wit the Ball Room. Seven or eight hundred couples under the coloured lights make a wonderful parterre. A mastery of rhythm such as you don't see in London. Influence of cinema apparent, since every girl is a Garbo, Shearer, Loretta Young, but oddly enough, no examples of Gracie Fields.

August 23 *Friday.* Not so successful at Penistone yesterday. In the open pony class, against all ages, Ego was second, just beaten by Barcroft Belle, champion everywhere. Tulip, who in the big class was obviously an easy second to Vitality, was put down to fourth at which the stand gasped. She went gloriously, and the crowd applauded her all

round the ground, while she was being shown and after. George Lancaster, who generally carries all before him for Mrs. Henriques and was a little disgruntled at only getting two 3rd prizes, said to me when he came out of the ring " I think, sir, you and I had better be getting back to England ! " An odd thing happened in Ego's class. Some ass had chalked a line like a tennis-court at right-angles to the grand-stand. Now Ego had never seen anything like this, and every time he had to cross it he shied, stopped, and then jumped. In so doing his crupper came off twice and it was a sheer miracle that with a horse as highly strung as Ego there was no accident. From his seat in the trap Albert could not see the line, and watching the class was very nervous work. Without this nonsense I am persuaded Ego would have won.

On the way along the very interesting half-urban, half-country north-east border of Lancashire I noticed a man in a mask standing at a street corner and whistling, two old cronies sitting on a bench, smoking their pipes and dandling their grand-, or more probably great-grand-children ; a new church in the wildly inappropriate manner of the theatre at Stratford-on-Avon and with chromium-plated fittings; and a pub called the Shannon and Chesapeake. The one chink I have ever been able to discover in the armour of Jock's omniscience is that he has never heard of these frigates. Returning through Preston and at the dingiest of old curiosity shops I bought a lovely collector's piece of Staffordshire pottery, a Romeo and Juliet. Priced at £4 10*s*., but after a lot of haggling got it for £2.

George Mathew left me at Huddersfield, and when I got back to St. Annes found Monty Shearman had arrived, unexpectedly because he had promised to turn up and " bilkers " is his speciality. Tried to pump him on the Abyssinian question, but he wouldn't be drawn, saying that it was shop and he mustn't talk it: " But if it's any consolation to you, James, I can promise you there won't be a pitched battle. The country's so hilly that there's nowhere to pitch one."

Monty regards my holiday rig of white duck with his usual well-bred disfavour.

J. A. When I am in Blackpool I dress like Blackpool.

MONTY. Being at St. Annes is no excuse for dressing like St. Anne!

But I had my revenge at lunch when I told him that the combination of mustard pickle, Meursault and his new M.C.C. tie would be impermissible even in one of his modern paintings.

August 24 *Saturday.* Heard this to-day. Discussing the fear of death which so idiotically obsesses me, Jock said: "Och, he's nothing to be afraid of. He'll just die naturally, in his sleep, at a first-night!"

August 26 *Monday.* This burlesque of my Diary manner has just come from Edward:

THE MISSING FORTNIGHT

Monday. Wire from Albert Throup "Nogo has toothache." What shall I do? Publisher writes "Nogo giving readers headache." What have I done?

Wednesday. Sold my tricycle to Hedges and Butler and bought a Rolls-Royce from Mudie's. Shall be able to feed at Scott's and the Carlton simultaneously. Have taken bungalow at Penzance, and Jock has given notice. Haggled for private removal van. Cheaper in the long run. Also the short.

Tuesday. Great conclave of wits at the Savage. Was mooted: If to be deprived of one toe, which would you prefer? Am broadcasting about this to-morrow.

Saturday. Telephone ringing all day *re* toe. Lilley and Skinner, Whipsnade and *Everybody's Weekly* unanimous. Massine less sure.

Tuesday. Read four novels, five of them rubbish. Albert wires Nogo's tooth extracted at Giggleswick, my dear old school.

Wednesday. Late lunch at "The Nettle." One cheese-straw and a pint of finger-bowl. Stung for £3 14*s.* 4*d.* without tip. Slept till six.

Thursday. Started hiking for Conway. Am told my sandals go well with cricket blazer. Got as far as Peak Forest. Dreadful bout of wind after bottle of non-vintage Dillinger in Severn Tunnel.

Friday. Wrote five thousand trains for Continental Bradshaw. Shrimped at Bognor then back to Perth.

Saturday. Insane letter from Edward. Starving. "Les

Parents Pauvres "? *Oui, certes!* Sent him three pounds, and forgot to post it.

Sunday. Wrote eighty-one thousand words for the new paper *Mice*. And a further eighty-two thousand for my Diary. What a *corvée* life is !

E. A.

August 27 *Tuesday.* To-day was wet and Blackpool on a wet day is as good a place as any. I spent the morning between the sea and the shops, resisting with difficulty the temptation to buy something flashy in wrist-watches. How potent cheap jewellery is, as Noel would say.

A wet night at Blackpool is another proposition. It *sogged* down, and everybody was driven indoors—greatly benefiting the places of amusement. We chose *Shout for Joy* at the Opera House. A good turn was one in which four of Louis Quatorze's courtiers threw two girls from one to another—an essay in the art of being at once Herculean and mincing. A band of Mexicans, or some foreign breed, rattled off on piano-accordions a medley of "Soldiers of the Queen," "Dolly Gray," "Everybody's Doing It," "Alexander's Rag-time Band," "Tipperary," "The British Grenadiers," "There's a Long, Long Trail," and "Land of Hope and Glory." This was announced as a selection from Noel Coward's *Cavalcade* ! For an encore the conductor gave a rousing performance of "The Lost Chord" on an instrument combining the virtues of cornet, coach-horn, and tooth-comb. This being acclaimed, the set revolved showing St. Cecilia in full blast with a triptych of Opera House angels, the whole impregnated with Blackpool chic. The audience was immensely impressed, and I thought it quite pretty. Afterwards a Mr. Randolph Sutton asked in three verses how a widower can beat an eight-year-old son who, besides being half his father's weight, has his dead mother's eyes !

August 28 *Wednesday.* *The Times* to-day has an article on Lope de Vega, who died 300 years ago. Here is a dramatist of whom I am ashamed to say that I know nothing, never having read a line of his works. Somehow I have never been drawn to him, though I am not repelled as I am by the

very name of Klopstock, who is the sort my brother Edward translates with gusto. *The Times* says L. de V. was " priest, soldier, ascetic, libertine, poet, pander, scoundrel and scholar," so I ought to know about him, and next week I expect I shall, as it is odds on all my papers wanting an article about him. I guarantee that (*a*) the articles will be forthcoming and (*b*) that they will imply more than they actually say.

Received an acute letter about Oscar Homolka's acting in *Close Quarters*:

> Homolka's legs are *too drunk for his mind* in the first act and the scene becomes something *pour épater*. I can imagine a defence being put up by the highbrow—" Legs have got beyond control " but he isn't mentally drunk and plays it from outside. It spoils an otherwise fine performance, though I wish he were just a little less anxious to act. Flora Robson rose to great heights, I thought, and achieved a conviction she never had before—for me at least.

It's a pity May won't let me reproduce the wise and witty stuff she sends me about the theatre. She says she has no right to criticise her fellow-artists, and marks all her letters " Not for publication." I tell her Ellen Terry had no such scruples, but she won't give way. I shall have to get round this somehow.

August 30 *Friday.* Horrified at the invention of the " Flying Flea " which, since it costs only £70, will presently be in everybody's hands. The wretched pedestrian, in addition to being charged from in front, run into from behind, and at cross-roads rammed from both sides, will now get it literally in the neck. I suppose 700 road-deaths a month is not enough ? There is, however, this to be said in favour of the " Flying Flea ": its driver cannot very well kill other people without killing himself.

Odd how one's views of what is important change with one's environment. In London I have got into the habit of regarding everybody north of, say Hendon, as savages, and am surprised to hear that they use knives and forks or even handkerchiefs.

Since I have been on holiday I have re-discovered these outlanders and find them to be not wholly boors. The Prince of Wales Hotel at Southport, where I lunched yesterday, seemed conversant with the amenities. Indeed it has innovated something. For on the back of its envelopes is printed :

> Letters posted in Hotel envelopes, if not delivered, are sent to the Dead Letter Office, unless the writer gives a return address.
>
> If not delivered, pleased return this letter to . . .

Arnold Bennett would have approved this.

The extent of the social change in Lancashire during the last thirty years is shown by the greater spread of accent. When I was a boy even in Manchester what we called " nice " people spoke perfect English. To-day either there are no nice people or the standard of politeness has been lowered, for everybody talks Lancashire. Now I do not object to a man showing by his speech whether he is English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh. But I do not think he should show his county. The accent which denotes *country* is a matter of the vocal chords and as little under a man's control as the colour of his hair; you might, indeed, call it vocal colour. But the accent denoting *county* is the affair of the mind, and very strictly so. It is largely a matter of stresses. Take the word " continue " in which educated people stress the middle syllable. Your Lancashireman divides the word into three equal syllables, with perhaps a shade of preference for the first. He talks of con-tinue as though there were such a word as pro-tinue, and he was anxious that no mistake should be made as to which word he was using.

All the same a fortnight in the North has reduced the London theatre to very small beer, and the capital itself to a rather meaningless collection of gadabouts. One thing, however, has surprised me. Why is there still no bridge or tunnel between Lytham and Southport, a matter of seven miles only ? Why do people still have to make the thirty-seven mile road trek by Preston ? What in this instance has happened to Lancashire grit ?

August 31 *Saturday.* Brother Edward continues to bombard me:

The Legend

Would you hear a mournful legend,
Would you read of one remembered,
Unforgettably remembered
In the Country of Clapamo ?[1]
One who lived in clustered dwellings,
Crowded dwellings, still increasing,
Wigwams, smoking to the Heavens,
Small and incommodious Wigwams,
On the South Side of the River ?

How he led a mean existence,
How he lived in destitution,
In a most unstable fashion,
In a manner most precarious,
Saying, to the last, that something
Might turn up at Any Moment ?

How he fished the Ponds adjacent,
On the Local Lakes canoed it;
Visited the Spots of Interest,
Ancient Sects of old Clapamo,
Or the Wastes of Wild Tootinga,
And the birthplace of Macaulay ?

Visiting the Utter Strangers,
(In moccasins, past repairing,
In moccasins past redemption),
Begging for the sweet tobacco,
Canvassing his foreign operas,
Foreign Operas, half-translated,
Hoping they were fond of Music ?

Here the grammar is uncertain,
But the Utter Strangers positive,
For they answered—shrugging shoulders:
" Nay, we have no Sweet Tobacco,
Nay, we do not want your company;
Neither do we like your Countenance
Or your operatic efforts;
Have we not the works of Choctaw ?
And we cannot lend you sixpence ! "

True, he had some near relations,
True, he had relations distant,
Folks who lived in ancient cities,
Folks Who Lived in Proper Houses,
Houses made of bricks and mortar;
Underneath the shade of Elm-Trees,[2]
'Mid the Middens of Mancunia,
In the Region of the Doughties.[3]

There was one, remitted silver,
From the Region of the Doughties,
To the Squaw who owned " The Wigwam ";
Sent her many, many pieces,
Till at last his memory failed him:
Patron-Saint of Far East-Endia,
Chronicler of Clactomania,[4]
Champion of the Minor Sea-ports,
Where the Vulgar herd together,
Booster of the Noisy Harbours,
Where the Crowd perspires profusely.

There was one who sent a Regular
Tribute from Mancunian Middens;
There was one . . . but why continue?
For the hero of our legend
Cared not for his Near Relations,
Cared not for Relations Distant,
Folks who dwelt in Proper Houses,
Folks who dwelt in ancient cities,
With their High-Ways idiotic,
And pretence of bricks and mortar,
Crying from their Coign of Vantage,
Coign of most unfair advantage:
" Come to see us! Always Welcome! "
Hoping that he would not hear them.

But the hero of this legend
Much preferred his tiny Wigwam,
Small and incommodious Wigwam,
With a view across the valley—
Straight across the Horrid Valley,
On the South Side of the River.

Would you hear the Mournful Legend?
Would you read the Moving Story?
You may see it in his Diary,
Only recently discovered.
There are many Volumes of it,
Bound in moose-skin, elk and buffalo
(Of the North-American produce).
Written in a pensive manner,
Written in a plaintive spirit,
Quite resigned, serene and hopeful,
Evangeline of all evangels;
Not too closely reasoned either,
He was never strong in Logic,
Tho' adept in punctuation,
And adored the Capital Letters.

So, if you would read the Story,
Turn the Leaves of this, his Diary.
There are several Volumes of it

Bound in moose-skin, elk and buffalo
(Of American-Indian produce),
Written in the quaintest characters,
Written with heart-rending Pathos,
From the Wigwams of Lynetta,[5]
From those clustered, crowded dwellings
On the Prairies of Clapamo.

E. A.

This requires annotating: 1. Clapham. 2. May lives in Elms Road. 3. Doughty Street. 4. Refers to my enthusiasm for Clacton. 5. A street in Clapham.

Sept. 1 *Sunday.* A post-card from Jock came late last night:

Donnerstag—leaving Hamburg for Denmark. English I not more read or speak can. So forgive please. I have said I would no more books for you to buy. But I must bring you for gift one of much perverse singularity.

Back to the grindstone. I wonder if it ever says to itself: What, that old nose again!

Had what I call a full day. Wrote out by hand *Country Life* article (950 words with erudite allusions to Lope de Vega). Read 4 books. Wrote out by hand *Daily Express* article (1,500 words). Wrote best part of a dozen letters.

All this with no Jock, and sitting in a room with Fred packing up and getting ready for to-morrow's removal. "What am I to do with this?" "Shall we want that?" And so on like an importunate bumble-bee. I find I write well under conditions which would drive most people daft.

Sept. 4 *Wednesday.* Wrote a few lines about Isidore de Lara who has died in Paris at the age of 77. The only opera of his that I ever heard was at Cette, in Provence, during the war. It was called *Naïl* or some such name, and my recollection is that it was all about an emperor and a slave who contended for the love of a dancing-girl. The house was like a furnace, and whenever the plot dragged, somebody came on and sang an Invocation to the Sun. De Lara was a man of much courtesy and kindness crammed to the finger-tips with the best French culture. I first met him at the

theatre. The piece was repertory stuff about Cornwall, with Sybil in full blast of dejection, and in the middle de Lara turned to me and said, " Décidément, Monsieur, cette pièce n'est pas d'une gaieté folle."

Sept. 5 *Thursday.* The last three days have been an orgy of discomfort, relieved only by the sight of Mary Jerrold wheeling her infant grand-daughter, Miss Penelope Morton, in a perambulator up and down Antrim Road in front of my windows. Lunched one day with Marie Tempest and Willie Browne, and we agreed that Ivor Novello's nose and chin are still the world's handsomest outline. Told Ivor this, and he said the word " still " was unnecessary. Ernest Fenton told me of an old actor who said to him: " I once gained admittance to the apartment of Charles Wyndham. He conducted me to the door with so much elegance that I felt he was inviting me in." The old boy is in form these days. Suggested this morning headline for the League of Nations' Conference on the Abyssinian affair.

" Eden's End. *Not* by J. B. Priestley."

But then Ernest would be witty on his death-bed. I told him so the other day and he corrected me: " On somebody else's death-bed." When he heard of the death of Cinders, my spaniel, he at once said: " That's as it should be. Dust to dust and cinders to cinders."

At the theatre last night Peter Page showed me a cutting from a gossip column:

> Seen at a house party, Claire Luce curled up in an onion bed eating 'em raw and reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.*"

" It's true," said Peter. " It happened at my place last Sunday. Claire called me across to the onion bed, waved her book at me and said in her rich American accent: ' Peter, I don't get this guy. If what he calls the thing in itself really is the thing in itself, it kinda queers Plato's definition of the absolute ! ' "

Sept. 6 *Friday.* This letter appeared in to-day's *Daily Express*:

> Abyssinia apart, does anybody know a cure for snoring? —A Bored Wife, Belsize-grove, Hampstead, N.W.

Letter from an East-Ender contains this:

> Sitting in the gallery of any theatre is like being hung on the ceiling with one's knees clamped under one's chin, while the actors look like full-stops with ears . . .

Jock very much amused because, with my *S.T.* article still to do, I spent most of the afternoon playing Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* on the newly-arrived baby grand. I don't suppose I have touched a piano six times in the last twenty years. Little, alas, remains of the virtuosity with which I used to perform the *Rondo Capriccioso*! The whirligig of time brings in his revenges, and this composer, for whom as a boy I had contempt, now seems to me to be a little master.

Sept. 7 *Saturday.* At the Café Royal last night Bergel of *The Evening News* tried to interest me in the colour of musical keys. He said that while A was a sickly green, B flat was royal purple. I asked him what C sharp minor smelled like.

Invited Jock to a reunion lunch at the Ivy. Tout le monde y mangeait, mangeait, including Marie Tempest, who was wearing one of her "crisp little hats." Jock insisting that the meal should represent all the countries he did *not* visit during his recent holiday, I had to eat Scotch broth and Khebbab à la Grecque and drink Irish whiskey and Norwegian Schnapps.

Sept. 9 *Monday.* This birthday letter:

> *September 9th*, 1935.
>
> DEAR MR. AGATE,
>
> I have been reading *Ego* with great delight.
>
> Your racy account of July 3rd 1932 intrigued me, particularly because of its reference to S. Paul's and the

" imbecile voluntary " which followed the service you attended.

Now, I take a close interest in the music of S. Paul's, and as a record is kept of voluntaries played, you may like to know that Bach's " Giant " Fugue was played after the 3-15 service and Handel's Fugue in F after the 7 o'clock service. The organist, I imagine, would consider these " imbecile " works a splendid feat of extemporising !

Yours sincerely,

MOIR CARNEGIE.

At first sight this is a smasher. My defence is that before plunging into these masterpieces the organist allowed his fingers to wander idly " over the noisy keys."

Went to-night to *Yoshe Kalb* by the Yiddish players, and still stick to my attitude towards plays in unknown tongues. I can never tell what the actors are jabbering about, and how can I know whether a player's expression is just, when I don't know what he is expressing ? The best synopsis is no good, for as Allan Monkhouse said when he declined to write a notice of Sarah Bernhardt's Marguerite Gautier: " I can't weep and strike matches at the same time." This means that I must postpone judgment on Maurice Schwartz till he condescends to appear in Shakespeare, which he apparently plays everywhere except in England. I skipped one of the many scenes in a cemetery and went for a drink to the Savage Club, where I ran into Bernard Spilsbury. I expected to find a ghoulish sort of person, reeking of iodoform; instead he turned out to be a cheery cove, like a county cricket captain, and with a smile from ear to ear.

Sept. 14 *Saturday.* Dame Madge Kendal dying this morning, with the result that the whole day has been given up to the nerve-wracking business of telephoning editors and rushing special articles. The journalist is like the undertaker: a death is just a job. This explains to-day's frequent references to Lady Bracknell's remark about dying: " Let's have no shilly-shallying," and Jock coming back from the Thorpe Bay post-office—we are not on the 'phone yet—and

shouting from the end of the street " No luck ! " This is not unfeeling. His space and how to fill it are the newspaper man's one thought, and everything may hang on the exact minute a celebrity dies. Last night B.B.C. orders were explicit. If Dame Madge died before 9 o'clock, broadcast at 9.40. If a minute after 9 no broadcast till next day.

For *The Sunday Times* I tried to do something besides the mere facts and dates which anybody can get out of the reference books. Broadcast six hundred words; afterwards part of the record made for my " Stars in their Courses " series was given. The bit chosen was the last six lines of the Epilogue to *As You Like It.* Age had slowed the voice and in place of Rosalind's tender gaiety there was the august pretending to be arch. But that gave all the more time to note the calculated range of vocal effect. If anything this was overdone, or perhaps it seemed so in an age which cannot do this at all. I had forgotten how Dame Madge said the word " farewell." I forgot that she half-intoned, half-sighed it so that it seemed to come from an immense distance, like Pervaneh's cry at the end of *Hassan.* To-night the effect was more than ghostly; the word had death in it, like an exhalation from the grave. *The Standard* describes her voice as " poor." I cannot understand this; it was warm and ringing, and full of an overflowing bounty. It also alludes to her troubles with her family. The old girl was as hard as nails to the end. The only people present at the bedside were the doctor and the nurse—a lonely death for one who had the public at her beck and call, and would not now beckon chick or child. Old Kendal willed nearly all his money to charity. He left £66,000, the income from this to be enjoyed for life by his wife, and on her death the income from £5,000 only to go to the four children. I made a guarded reference to this family feud in the *S.T.* because it did not seem right to leave it out entirely. But I wasn't too sure about it; Gray's line about not drawing frailties from their dread abode seems pretty safe journalism as well as good poetry. I would rather bet my boots that Madge K. will give the Recording Angel what for if his account of her is inaccurate in the least particular. She was the greatest English actress

of my time, and perhaps the second best woman player I ever saw.

Sept. 15 *Sunday.* It pelted with rain all morning, so stayed in and read new books and old. Baudelaire's prayer to be granted new experience however poisonous prompted me in the afternoon, when it cleared up, to take a look at Southend from the tripper's angle. Accordingly Tommy Hanson and I " did " the front, the pier and the Kursaal, winding up with a shrimp tea. (Tommy had cockles.) I had the Curzonish idea that this would be horrid. Actually the tea was excellent (better than I get in most London hotels), no fault to be found with the brown bread and butter, and the shrimps fresh. The fashionable way to eat them is to press head and tail together between thumb and forefinger, and bite off the middle bit. The meal cost a bob a nob, and was very cheap.

Sept. 16 *Monday.* Jumped out of bed at eight o'clock this morning and rushed to the Diary, all because of a sentence in *The Times*' obituary notice of Madge K:

> A very unhistrionic coldness of temperament and a superficiality of thought were the barriers between her acting and any form of greatness; and her rare adventures into the more exacting plays of the modern drama (*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was one of them) left the audience cold and set the critics unwillingly contrasting her with Mrs. Patrick Campbell or with Duse.

What utter balderdash ! Could Mrs. Pat have played Susan Hartley in *A Scrap of Paper*, Mrs. Sternhold in *Still Waters Run Deep*, or touch the subdued passion of Mildred Archerson in *The Likeness of the Night* ? Could Duse have realised both Lady Gay Spanker and the Elder Miss Blossom ? Was either of them mistress of that overwhelming pathos which, in *William and Susan*, plunged the audience into such a state of tears that it could not find the exits ? Madge Kendal's forte was not the flamboyant and her greatness was of another kind. It is not a fault in Constable that his skies are not Turner's.

Madge K. was of the English school, of the Victorian English. She was as much a part of the age of horse-hair sofas and wax fruit as Mrs. Pat was of the 'nineties, and Janet Achurch of the early nineteen hundreds. Consider one or two of the things written about her in her heyday by responsible critics. Some time in the 'nineties Shaw wrote:

> The Kendals are now replaced by couples equal to them in dress, manners, good looks, and domestic morality, but subject to the disadvantage of not possessing in their two united persons as much power of acting as there is in the tip of Mrs. Kendal's little finger-nail.

William Archer about the same period:

> It was pleasant to welcome Mrs. Kendal back again to London. And it was doubly pleasant to see, for once in a way, an actress who can act, who knows what she wants to do, and does it. She played with force, fire and feeling, and a perfect mastery of her means of expression which we had almost ceased to think possible on the English stage. Here was neither elegant helplessness nor mannerism incarnate: here was a real woman throwing-herself with the ardour of sympathetic conviction, and the ease of consummate accomplishment, into a living, suffering, palpitating character.

And now for a little excursion into logic. In 1876 Disraeli went to the Haymarket to see the play called *Peril*. He afterwards wrote to Lady Bradford to say that he had been to see "an adaptation from the French *Nos Intimes*—not over-moral but cleverly acted in the chief part—a woman, whom I doubt not, you, an *habituée* of the drama, know very well, but quite new to me. Now she is married, but she was a sister of Robertson, the playwright. She had evidently studied in the French school." Disraeli's standard was pitched pretty high. Invited to a party at Lord Dudley's to see Sarah Bernhardt play, he declined, as he could not forego country air! A few weeks later he did attend a party, whereupon he writes: "The principal saloon, turned into a charming theatre, received the world to witness the heroine of the

hour, Sarah Bernhardt." That is all he had to say of Sarah. Of Henry Irving he wrote in 1880: " I liked the *Corsican Brothers* as a melodrama and never saw anything put cleverer on the stage. Irving, whom I saw for the first time, is third-rate, and never will improve." Now for the little sum in logic. On the one hand, Sarah Bernhardt does not merit Disraeli's comment and Irving is a third-rater. On the other hand, Disraeli, who thought enormously of the French school, could say that Mrs. Kendal acted cleverly and had evidently studied in that school.

I have seen no reference to Madge K.'s sense of fun. This was as much a part of her as her moral standards and physical well-being. Her comedy was enchanting and better than any comedy can ever be again, because it was instinct with the sense of infringement, and hers was the day when there was a social code to be infringed and the penalties were exacted. Though the mistress of awe she had also a delicious feeling for enormity.

I have never forgotten how, in some farce in which she sat upon and drummed her heels against an oak chest containing her husband's mistress, she despatched that delinquent to the village on some imaginary errand. " R-run like the swift hare ! " she trilled to him through the window in huge enjoyment of his discomfiture and before turning to make a meal of the luckless lady in the box. To render the great scene in *The Likeness of the Night* with the utmost of pathos and to extract the maximum amount of fun out of the same scene in farce is the mark of a great actress.

John Bright once said he took no exception to novels provided all the characters in them were good, and in this sense the theatre of the Kendals was irreproachable. Their plays were more than wholesome; they were exciting, and wore well. For eighty years Madge Robertson's view of life as an Englishwoman and an English actress ought to live it remained settled; she regarded it as something astronomically constant. She played Paula Tanqueray, but only because Paula came to a bad end. If Paula had successfully negotiated that unforeseen hurdle which was Captain Ardale

there would not have been enough money in the Bank of England to bring Paula and Mrs. Kendal together. She was a great actress, not only because as the result of an arduous apprenticeship she possessed a dazzling technique, but because behind her acting there was mind and character. Conversely, if she could be all the Tartars there ever were rolled into one, the account was balanced by the discipline she imposed upon her art.

Madge Kendal would have been a great woman in any walk of life, and I have always thought that when Irving died his mantle descended not upon any other actor but upon her. Since she saw the era of the New Woman merge into that of the Woman with a Vote, there could have been no impropriety in the mantle of leadership becoming an Edwardian bonnet. The puce strings by which that bonnet was kept rigidly in place were the reins with which its wearer could have governed the English stage. And, in the estimation of her fellow-players, she did.

I have been staggered to find how few of my colleagues have attempted a critical survey. But I ought not to be, since hardly any of them saw her. Darlington in *The Daily Telegraph* notes that her connection with the Haymarket came to an end in 1874 but entirely omits the nine years at the St. James's from 1879 to 1888. He then adds:—" To be able to remember her later achievements is by now something of a certificate of approaching old age." I can only say with Coriolanus:—" Boy ! " Of the other tributes far and away the best is Shaw's:

> There was an actress named Mrs. Kendal who died professionally at the end of last century. She was technically a most accomplished actress who belonged to the domestic drama of that period. The type of triangular play in which she made her great successes was killed dead by Ibsen and to some extent by myself. Mrs. Kendal never recovered from the shock and in her place came the outstanding public figure Dame Madge Kendal. Mrs. Kendal was extremely clever. She was much more accomplished than any actress of to-day. When I used to meet her in the

old days I never got a word in edgeways, which was a very unusual experience. She had even more assurance then than in her later years, for she refused to listen to anybody.

G. B. S. may be in his second childhood. But, if so, as Jock says, it's a very precocious infant!

Sept. 18 *Wednesday.* Altrincham. This last of the season's shows bears to Richmond and Olympia the same relation that the St. Leger bears to the Derby. Of all one-day shows distinction is most coveted here. It was a great day for Ego, who looked absolutely lovely and went gloriously. The arrangements were shocking, all the Hackney classes except Ego's taking place at the same time as the big public luncheon. This lasted for hours owing to the local Member spilling himself about milk and Abyssinia. The result was that while the popular side of the ring was crowded the grand stand was empty except for half-a-dozen enthusiasts. Ego's exit after he had won gave me a greater thrill than any I have ever known outside the theatre; his quality of sheer grace took everybody's breath away.

Sept. 19 *Thursday* Poem from brother Edward:

Browningesque

The bee's at the sting,
The fuchsia's forlorn,
Bill is at Selsey,
The curry's in comb.

The pong's on the ping,
The quail is unborn,
Carlyle's in Chelsea,
The Barretts are home.

E. A.

Sept. 20 *Friday* Letter in the Press from friend of some well-known American actor saying the best acting he ever saw was Sarah in *Phèdre*, Booth in *Hamlet*, Irving in *Louis XI* and Madge Kendal "in anything, reciting the A.B.C. if you like."

Letter in to-day's *Times* from Miss F. Forbes-Robertson:

Photo : Rouch

Ego. Albert Throup Driving

I cannot hope that you will publish this letter, as it is, I fear, *lèse-majesté* to question a critic's opinion expressed in your valuable paper. Nevertheless I venture to challenge the statement that " there were barriers between Madge Kendal's acting and any form of greatness." One cannot admit the barriers. Madge Kendal was undoubtedly our greatest comedian; she was the first to interpret her art in a modern spirit—the first to be untheatrical, unsentimental —attainments described by your critic as " coldness of temperament and superficiality of thought." Surely a flagrantly indiscriminate summary of the subtle, sensitive acting of this great comedian. That she failed in the second-rate neurotic drama *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was due to her unsuitability for exaggerated histrionics. May I further say that surely the whole notice does inadequate honour to such a great exponent of her art ?

This letter prompted me to find out what newspapers had treated this great figure adequately. I found only *The Manchester Guardian*, grandly right as usual, right and noble. It has a short leader which ends:

Probably there are not many people now living who can express an opinion from personal memories on whether the Madge Robertson who became Mrs. Kendal made a naturally inspired Ophelia, Desdemona, Juliet, Lady Macbeth, and the rest; the stronger assumption is that she played Shakespeare because Shakespeare was the thing to play. It was the " drawing-room comedy " of the later Victorian period which established her real eminence and her popularity, with a recognition that owed something to qualities of character as well as of acting. Her life and her outlook were a standing challenge to those who would associate the stage with Bohemianism; dyed and doubly dyed in the working theatre, schooled in its legitimate pride, its traditions, and its tremendous capacity for taking pains, Madge Kendal to the end of her life was of the bourgeoisie rather than the Bohemians. At the close of an interview with her in a long-vanished magazine there is reproduced a signed phrase in her own script: " It's hard to keep straight in a world that's so round." Her own line kept straight enough, and was eminently and unrepentantly Victorian.

Good old *M.G.*, still eminently and unrepentantly first-class!

The same issue has an article on the last cricket match of the season in which Neville Cardus says:

> Read bowled Mitchell with a really fast ball; on the whole, though, Read is only a fast bowler in the contemporary sense.

I despair of getting the young people who are to-day's dramatic critics to realise that the great actors of to-day are great only in the contemporary sense.

Made special journey to Charing Cross to get *The Spectator*, *New Statesman* and *Time and Tide*. Not a word about Madge Kendal in any one of them. I can only suppose their sapient editors and editresses went about their offices murmuring Musset's

" Sans doute il est trop tard pour parler encor d'elle."

I shall go on quoting this as long as the newspapers are possessed by the passion for quick oblivion.

Yet another foreign actress, Fräulein Lucie Mannheim. There is a point about foreign actresses which nobody seems to have made. This is that they should be judged with relation to their foreignness. The fact that any Frenchwoman is better dressed than any Englishwoman does not make her well-dressed in Paris. The fact that any Englishman is better dressed than any Frenchman does not make him anything out of the ordinary in London. It is the same with regard to acting. Your French actress possesses a verve, a buoyancy, and a Latin charm which do not exist outside Latin countries; your Russian actress has a grace like a drenched fuchsia opening after rain; your German actress is known for her *Gemüthlichkeit*; and presumably your English ingénue waving a tennis-racket and scampering across the stages of Europe would bring to those hot-houses a breath of unaccustomed and therefore overrated fresh air. Now we in England do not rate Miss Dot as a great actress in simple virtue of that waving and scampering, since she does these things no better than Miss Dash and in both is rivalled by Miss Blank. In England la Dot is regarded as supreme only if she can, to stretch a metaphor, give the other ladies half-thirty and a beating.

When we hear of an English actress scoring a success in, say Leningrad, we utter a well-bred smile and say, " Yes ! that's just about what they *would* think ! " And I have equally little doubt that Paris, reading of the success over here of a Great French Actress of whom it has never heard, returns the compliment. Mlle. Yvonne Printemps was a great little comédienne not because her Mozart was outside the scope of English playing; her great littleness consisted in playing the part better than any other French actress could do. I have no doubt that any Russian actress, even the poorest, can play Mme. Ranevsky better than any English actress, however good. The point to decide about Mme. Germanova was whether she was better than the rest of Russian actresses. I have been privileged to know many German-Jewish families, every one containing a young girl with the qualities we associate with Miss Bergner. The point, then, to make about this actress is not how much better she is than young English girls, but how much her holding in the German-Jewish quality exceeds that of any other German-Jewish actress.

The same medicine must, of course, be served up all round. Breezy Juliets and strapping Rosalinds are hailed abroad as masterly because of their English open-air quality, whereas the point an English critic would make of Jean Forbes-Robertson's Viola is not that her performance was an alternative to hockey, but that it transcended in beauty any other English rendering since Ellen Terry's.

By the way, I had a good joke in *S.T.* article to-day. Mannheim's play is all about a film-star's double, the underpaid dummy who deputises for the star in shipwrecks, train smashes, balloon ascents, and being thrown over waterfalls. I wrote as follows: " Whence one foresees the next Nazi Shakespeare making his Justice Shallow say, ' And is young Double dead ? How a score of Jews now at Dresden Fair ? ' "

Sept. 24 *Tuesday.* Apropos of *Peer Gynt* last night at the Old Vic. our Charles writes in to-day's *Times*:

> Miss Florence Kahn's Ase . . . developed, as she proceeded, a lovely dignity which, in her death-scene, sprang,

as it should, to life—to a kind of spiritual vivaciousness and joy that crowned her performance.

This makes me wonder whether Charles has ever been ill, and whether, when he is, he sends for the doctor. In the middle of my broadcast last night I had a sudden attack of something or other and my heart went so fast I could hardly get my words out. Should I ring the bell on the desk or stop and run out and get somebody to finish? Hung on somehow, and it passed off. Very nasty while it lasted—about a page of typescript—and precious little "vivaciousness and joy" knocking about Studio D3!

Sept. 25 *Wednesday.* Lunched at the Ivy with Curt Dehn, my lawyer, who asked the name of the man lunching opposite. I said "John Gielgud." Dehn said "It's a rum sort of head. The profile's Roman Emperor, but the rest is still at Eton." He told me that in Hamburg, and indeed other parts of Germany, whenever two friends part after a conversation in which politics have cropped up, it is not unusual for one to say to the other: "*Sie haben auch was gesagt!*"[1] This is one of the most sinister things I ever heard.

Daily Mail dinner to Malcolm Campbell, who spoke extraordinarily well. I sat next to Harold Dearden, who informed me that last night's symptoms are not the prelude to any known form of fatal seizure. Just nerves. H. D. very amusing all evening. "The chorus-girl voice is the oddest thing we shall hear this side the tomb!" Pleasant yarn with Charlie Cochran who said that compared with Irving and the old-timers *all* modern actors are selling-platers as against crack race-horses.

Sept. 26 *Thursday.* Herman Finck told me this story of Arthur Roberts at the time when he was a beau, and fashion-plate of the profession. He and Arthur were rehearsing for the Empire a skit on the current "Protean" craze, entitled *The Cruise of the Saucy Puss.* Arthur was to play all the parts and had billed himself as

[1] "You also have said something."

Arthur Roberts, Mr. A. Roberts, Mr. Roberts, Monsieur Roberts, Herr Roberts, Signor Roberts and so forth. Herman called at Arthur's place one morning and found him in a dressing-gown:

H. F. Hurry up, or we'll be late for rehearsal.

A. R. Can't come, old boy. (*Pointing to dressing-gown*) No clothes!

H. F. Nonsense. Your clothes are the talk of the town. You wear a new suit every day.

A. R. Yes, old boy, but it's not mine. A tailor sends one every morning for advertisement, and to-day he's forgotten.

Sept. 27 *Friday.* Discussing with Clifford Bax the lack of support for the proposed Phœnix revival Jock said: "I think we'd better console ourselves by going to America to see Gladys Cooper play Shakespeare." Clifford replied in his flageolet voice and with a twinkle in eyes and beard: "Well, I've played cricket with her, and I think she does that rather better!"

Sept. 28 *Saturday.* Letter from Tait and Allott:

Newcastle-on-Tyne.
September 26th, 1935.

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

We hope you are well as we are not. We bear you the news that Mary Newcombe will act in *Prickly Pear* at the Q—— but not till January. She hunts it seems. Sport will be the ruin of the drama yet.

Should you feel amiable you may reply to this piece of humble-pie. Being polite: how is your Diary progressing? We listened to your broadcast, for which tissue of evasions God forgive you.

Yours,
KENNETH ALLOTT
p.p. STEPHEN TAIT.

This shows that the boys are keeping their pecker up. And now, I suppose, I must do the same by mine! Letter from unknown correspondent in Corriemar, Fifeshire, saying:

We, my wife and a few friends in these remote parts, should like to welcome you back to the microphone. We much enjoyed your snappy talk last Monday but it was a great pity that you ruined nearly half of it by talking much too quickly thereby getting yourself so out of breath as to make us quite alarmed. We longed to offer you a brandy and soda.

So it *was* noticeable, after all!

Sept. 29 *Sunday.* To-day's euphuism encountered in a modern novel—the description of a hand as "that quintet of alabaster peninsulas."

Monty came down to Thorpe Bay yesterday and after the golf I showed him the bungalow. M., passing a lily peninsula over the pained promontory of his brow, said: "So that's what a bungalow's like." For oneself if one lived in the country at all one lived in a period house some two hours from London. Didn't one see that? There is an *intransigeance* about the dear fellow which almost amounts to grace.

Sept. 30 *Monday.* Winifred Holtby died yesterday at the age of thirty-seven. When I first met her three years ago she was ill, and in spite of her cheerfulness I felt it was serious. The occasion was a debate at some women's club, in which we fell upon one another with great determination. She and Vera Brittain had given me dinner at the Café Royal, at which neither of them ate or drank anything while insisting on lots of everything for me. The next time we met was when she took the chair for me at one of *The Sunday Times* Book Exhibition lectures. Third and last time was one of the Foyle luncheons. Harry Preston was in the chair, and she hung on this symbol a dazzling speech on the function of gaiety. Anybody who has ever done any public speaking must have realised that the fireworks had a logical framework to support them. It was a wonderful and, I believe, impromptu effort, with an argument exactly marshalled in three parts gathered together at the finish, every word in place and no loose ends. I was sitting next to her and I told her just what I thought about the speech, and I believe she was happy that

afternoon. I did not know Winifred Holtby well in the sense of meeting her often. But one did not need long-standing friendship to recognise a forceful character, a forthright mind and a gracious personality abounding in that unquenchable gaiety of which she had spoken. She had a beautiful voice, and her speech had a conscious loveliness while remaining free from affectation. She antagonised nobody. To have a soul of steel, to be incapable of delivering hurt, to find all possible fun in life, and to walk crowded streets with the gait of one striding empty moors—these are the things I admired in Winifred Holtby.

The Daily Express blows the gaff this morning about Madge Kendal and her children, who get nothing from this Roman matron's estate except the income from £5,000 under their father's will. In an interview one of the daughters speaks of her mother's " ungovernable temper." This is putting it mildly, for all actors know that in the theatre she was a virago unchained. There is a dreadful story about Madge K. and an ingénue shivering in the wings prior to making a first appearance. Madge strode up to the child, and tearing a wreath from her head together with a handful of curls said in an awful voice: " You are supposed to be the vicar's daughter. How dare you attempt to go on my stage looking like the village whore ? " I think it was Courtenay Thorpe who told me this. He had a tremendous admiration for her as an artist. But her bosom in family matters was of stone, and it was this quality which in one play at least enabled her to reach the heights of a great tragic actress. Other actresses in *The Likeness of the Night,* when they said " Go back ! " to the mistress about to touch the wife's hand, would have contrived a certain frostiness; Mrs. Kendal put an Ice Age between the pair. She inspired terror because, *au fond,* she was terrible. Madge Kendal was a Fury in human guise. That was nature; her pathos and her comedy, both irresistible, were art. Only fools will argue whether they would have preferred a better mother and a worse actress.

A cloud no bigger than a man's hand has appeared on the horizon. Jock, who is on three days' holiday, writes that Ivor

Brown is insistently recommending him as his successor on *The Manchester Guardian*, the change to take place at once. (It seems that Ivor wants to cut down his work a little.) Jock writes that he will agree to anything that doesn't mean abandoning me entirely.

Oct. 1 *Tuesday.* Jock, putting his head round my bedroom door this morning and noting my interesting pallor, said, " I know what's wrong with you. Je ne suis pas un à parler, but you're drinking too much ! " As an idiomatic rendering of " I'm not one to talk " this takes some beating.

Letter from Whitechapel:

Whitechapel.
29/9/35.

DEAR SIR,

Are you aware that the Jewish New Year has just begun ? Perhaps, therefore, you will not mind if a Jewish family, i.e. secretary, milliner, student of economics, and a dressmaker, obey a New Year resolution, and thank you for a great deal of pleasure you have given us. James Agate is a familiar household word amongst us since, in fact, you wrote an article many years ago in *The Daily Chronicle* concerning the purchase of a vase, which if we remember rightly you could not really afford to buy.

It might possibly interest you to know that we were the first people in Whitechapel to read *Ego* ? We could not afford the luxury of buying it, but we nagged the librarian of the public library daily until a copy was installed, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

There are many Jewish people in the East End keenly interested in good acting and in the theatre, and you have taught us much in an agreeable and refreshing way. In writing to you we are merely following the advice given to us by one of our Rabbis: " He who learns from his fellow a single chapter, a single rule, a single verse, a single expression, or even a single letter, ought to pay him honour."

With all good wishes, from
THE ROSENTHAL FAMILY.

I am very proud of this.

Also a letter from Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies hoping I will seek and find a design for living which will prevent me from becoming a misery to myself and everybody around me in my declining years !

And as I am putting away the Diary the post brings this from a West Country parson:

> I've just been reading your *Ego*. Excellent fooling, and more laughs than in most comedies. But I really wrote to you because of an extraordinary coincidence. You not only admit to a " compulsion neurosis," but actually to one which I thought was my private madness—the " multiple-of-four " business. Being a moderately respectable parson I can't put it down to drink or women ; but I used to settle down in bed with a book and then be forced to hop in and out in *multiples of four*, in order to get a feeling of balance and perfection ! Sixteen was the idea, being four squared, but I have touched thirty-two on rough nights. Marriage has toned me down, as wives don't like husbands who hop like frogs in and out of bed. But I still get the feeling slightly and I have to touch and tap things in rhythmic fours.
>
> I think it goes with music and writing: I dabble in both.

I am refraining from telling my co-sufferer that 32 is a mere bagatelle, and that 128 is common.

Oct. 2 *Wednesday.* Jock entirely refuses to take the war danger seriously. His comment on the alarmist newspaper placard " Italians in Abyssinia " is: " Sounds like an opera by Rossini."

Oct. 3 *Thursday.* War starts, all the same.

Oct. 5 *Saturday.* Alexander Korda having asked my advice about two versions of *Cyrano*, one of which cuts down the famous Nose cadenza to almost nothing and the other funking it entirely, I asked Brother Edward to have a shot at it. I had reckoned without his contempt for the

cinema. By return of post I got a flea-in-ear refusal out of respect for (a) the original Cyrano, (b) Rostand, (c) himself. He wound up with Cyrano's " Que je pactise ? Jamais, jamais ! " I have never known Edward when he would not sooner starve than compromise or truckle.

Oct. 6 *Sunday.* Became a god-father to-day for the third time. Seeing me set out with christening mug and bottle of champagne—to set Robert James on the way he should go—Jock said: " Don't mistake the kid for a battleship and break the bottle over its napper ! "

Oct. 7 *Monday.* Broadcast to-night and in view of last experience rather nervous. Passed off very well and am told the result was better than ever before. Supped with Moray McLaren at the Mayfair. When I said of an actress that she was " most convincing " he said: " She's more. She's convincing ! "

Oct. 8 *Tuesday.* An idle day, which means that I have overlooked an article. Shall occupy it in setting down something about actors and acting, since after all that is probably what most people read me for. As I have written elsewhere all I have to say of the players of my youth and in view of that vow to say no more about Sarah[1] I shall jot down some recollections of my father's table-talk. When I was a boy we had a Sunday dinner-table to absent oneself from which was an unheard-of thing. At dessert my father would hold forth about all the great actors and actresses he had seen. The list began with Macready, of whom he had no very great opinion; he was too cold. Phelps was a great name, together with the Younger Mathews. Fechter, too, he thought a brilliant actor, and I who had already read George Henry Lewes to Fechter's detriment had some difficulty in restraining my tongue. Then there was a great deal of talk about Fanny Kemble, and Helen Faucit, and especially about Modjeska, an exquisite Polish actress who was a beautiful Juliet. In 1881 Modjeska appeared in Manchester in

[1] See *Ego.*

Frou-frou, and W. T. Arnold wrote in the *M.G.* as follows:—" The opening of the fourth act was touchingly played with a kind of sad dignity which suited the part. The scene with Sartorys was moving and powerful and the death scene in the fifth act touching. Its great merit was the continued thought for the child at the dying woman's feet. Sarah Bernhardt forgot him too soon." I was only four years old when this appeared, and not a noticeably better dramatic critic than some of my young colleagues to-day. Also I did not see Modjeska, though when years later I saw Sarah play Frou-frou, Arnold seemed to me to have committed rank *lèse-majesté*.

Three names were continually on my father's lips—those of Alfred Wigan, Barry Sullivan, and " Little " Robson. The critics of the past treated Wigan rather shabbily, and the best thing I have ever been able to find about him is Henry Morley's: " Mr. Wigan has been for many years quietly and steadily advancing in the public esteem as a careful and conscientious actor, who understands the art to be an intellectual one, and so pursues it." But that, considering that it was written in 1853, says a great deal more than it appears to do on the surface. About Barry Sullivan my father always said that he was the last of the great actors, and could and did tear a passion to tatters without being ridiculous—which cannot be said of to-day's actor who is much more likely to be ridiculous without tearing a passion to anything approaching tatters. But the best intimation of Barry Sullivan's quality came to me not from my father but from Courtenay Thorpe, that fine intellectual actor of the 'nineties. Thorpe, as a young man, was walking with Barry Sullivan in Westminster. The great actor was explaining to him a point in his Hamlet, and neither of them noticed that they had arrived at a scene of congestion, cordons of police, and all that goes with the opening of Parliament. They began to cross the road and were stopped by a bobby. Whereupon Barry with a magnificent gesture not only spiritually waved but physically put the policeman on one side and continued his dissertation as though Parliament, and even the Monarchy, didn't exist.

On the subject of Robson my father was inexhaustible, declaring him to be very nearly the best actor he had ever set eyes on. Of this great little comedian and burlesque tragedian—he was no bigger in stature than Garrick—much has fortunately been recorded. Clement Scott has written of him: " The only strictly serious part that I ever saw Robson play was Desmarets in *Plot and Passion*, a performance never to be forgotten; but his burlesque was on the very borderline of tragedy. Such intensity he had, such power of sudden contrast, such quick changes from seriousness to fun, that he electrified one. In an instant he had the whole audience in his grasp, and communicated to them his magnetic personality. . . . He was a very little man, but in his inspired moments he became a giant. He seemed to swell and grow before our eyes. When he lifted himself up, his rage was awful; when he wept, the whole house sobbed in sympathy."

Still more illuminating is a little-known account by George Augustus Sala:

> In *The Yellow Dwarf* Robson was the jaundiced embodiment of a spirit of Oriental evil; crafty, malevolent, greedy, insatiate—full of mockery, mimicry, lubricity, spite—an Afrit, a Djinn, a Ghoul, a spawn of Sheitan. How that monstrous orange-tawny head grinned and wagged ! How those flaps of ears were projected forwards, like unto those of a dog ! How balefully those atrabilious eyes glistened ! You laughed, and yet you shuddered. He spoke in mere doggerel and slang. He sang trumpery songs to negro melodies. He danced the Lancashire clog hornpipe; he rattled out puns and conundrums; yet did he contrive to infuse into all this mummery and buffoonery, into this salmagundi of the incongruous and the outré, an unmistakably tragic element—an element of depth and strength and passion, and almost of sublimity. The mountebank became inspired. The Jack Pudding suddenly drew the cothurnus over his clogs. You were awe-stricken by the intensity, the vehemence he threw into the mean balderdash of the ballad-monger. These qualities were even more apparent in his subsequent personation of Medea, in Robert Brough's parody of the Franco-Italian tragedy. The love, the hate, the scorn of the abandoned wife of Jason,

the diabolic loathing in which she held Creusa, the tigerish affection with which she regarded the children whom she is afterwards to slay—all these were portrayed by Robson, through the medium, be it always remembered, of doggerel and slang, with astonishing force and vigour. The original Medea, the great Ristori herself, came to see Robson and was delighted with and amazed at him. She scarcely understood two words of English, but the actor's genius struck her home through the bull's-hide target of an unknown tongue. " *Uomo straordinario !* " she went away saying.

I have quoted thus much about Robson because I have a relic of him. This is the tobacco-box he used in *The Porter's Knot.* A letter goes with the box, dated February 12th, 1908, and written by Mrs. Emily Combes. The letter says: " Dear Mr. Tree, On the chance that you may collect theatrical relics, I am sending you the old ' baccy ' box used by the late Frederick Robson in *The Porter's Knot,* in the hope that you will do me the favour to accept it. It was given to Alfred Bryan the artist, by the widow of F. R. who gave it to my husband." The box was presented to me by the writer's nephew. I rank it third in what must be the smallest collection of theatrical relics in the country. The first two are a knife found under the floor of Shakespeare's house at the time of its restoration, and Henry Irving's press-cutting scissors. Seymour Hicks gave me these, and I like his story that Irving whenever he used the scissors to cut out the notice of some famous critic would snarl: " What does he know about it ? " My fourth and fifth treasures are two photographs of Irving and Ellen Terry which, in their present frames, hung for twenty-five years on either side of Irving's dressing-table at the Lyceum. When Irving died his valet gave them to Lady Martin-Harvey, and she very kindly gave them to me.

My father was the most severe of critics and would come home after a performance of Irving's saying that the man had so many faults that he oughtn't to be on the stage at all ! Yet at heart he admired him tremendously though he always said that Macaire was his best performance.

About Ellen Terry he held the opinion that she was the

most exquisite of all human creatures, but not a great actress. Of all English actresses he placed Mrs. Kendal first, one of her greatest feats in his opinion being to have turned her husband from a stick into a tolerably competent comedian. He had considerable admiration for Hare and Wyndham, and a strictly limited appreciation of the Bancrofts. But his view about Tree as a serious actor was that he ought to be whipped! Indeed I remember his taking me to see Tree and Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *Fédora* at the Haymarket and telling me afterwards that the age of the professional actor was gone, and that all I had seen that evening was a couple of talented amateurs!

My own conscious playgoing began just about the time that the English Drama was undergoing one of its many re-births. I mean, of course, the first night of Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in 1893, which is not very noticeably short of fifty years ago. Elsewhere I have named my theatrical gods of that period. Has the reader noticed the omission to make very much of Duse? Here undoubtedly the actress's nationality has stood in the way of my admiring her. I have always avoided setting up to be a judge of any player speaking a language of which I don't know enough to order a mutton chop. But that the English have never understood Italian has not prevented them from hailing the Italian actress as a world-genius. According to Maurice Baring, who can speak anything from Russian to Choctaw, Arthur Symons, who could translate Dante standing on his head, Shaw, who could lecture to Venetians in their own language on the function of drains in a water-logged city, and the omniscient Walkley, whose beard could laugh in any language it liked—according to all these, Duse was an undeniably great actress. Personally I never trusted my own opinion about her because, as I have already said, I know no Italian except the names of some of the arias in Mozart's operas. In consequence I was never able to tell whether, when Duse came on waving her lovely hands and looking like the back of the kitchen grate, she was bewailing the coldness of the cold mutton at lunch or proposing to enter a nunnery! Also she affected me exactly in

the way in which she affected Max Beerbohm. Some of to-day's young people may not know Max's dramatic criticisms by heart, and therefore I shall remind them of this: "Am I overwhelmed by the personality of Duse? Of course, I ought to be—there can be no question of that. But the wretched fact remains that I am not. True, I see power and nobility in her face; and the little shrill soft voice, which is in such strange contrast with it, has a certain charm for me. I admire, too, her movements, full of grace and strength. But my prevailing emotion is hostile to her. I cannot surrender myself, and see in her the 'incarnate womanhood' and 'the very spirit of the world's tears' and all those other things which other critics see in her. My prevailing impression is that of a great egoistic force; of a woman overriding, with an air of sombre unconcern, plays, mimes, critics and public. In a man I would admire this tremendous egoism very much indeed. In a woman it only makes me uncomfortable. I dislike it. I resent it."

Oct. 9 *Wednesday.* Lunch with Alexander Korda who to my enormous astonishment turns out to be a man of great culture and distinction of mind. We talked about a lot of things including the Goncourts' novels which, he says, "are not so good as we thought when we were young men." He insists that I shall help with his new film of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and for the reason that his Hungarian nationality prevents him from detecting the finer shades of English verse. In the end I agree to do what he wants, and I hope my incursion into films will continue as pleasantly as it has begun.

In the evening go to the Reinhardt film of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which Shakespeare is alleged to make his first appearance on the screen. He doesn't!

Oct. 10 *Thursday.* The law in America appears to be even more of a h'ass than it is in this country. I quote the following from *The Manchester Guardian*:

> Hauptmann appealed from the jury's verdict on the ground that the emotional atmosphere of the courtroom

was prejudicial to his case and that no evidence had been advanced that he had committed a felony in addition to being responsible for the child's death. In New Jersey the death sentence is only possible when a prisoner is found guilty of murder rather than of homicide, and a conviction for murder is only possible if the prosecution proves either premeditation or that the victim died during the commission of a felony. To establish this felony the State alleged that when Hauptmann kidnapped the infant he also stole its sleeping suit. Ordinarily the theft of such a suit would be petty larceny, but if a theft involves unlawful entry it automatically becomes a felony.

In future, kidnappers will have to pinch the kids naked. Which means that they will die of pneumonia !

Oct. 11 *Friday.* Spend a busy day interviewing young actors for the part of Christian in *Cyrano*. What is wanted is a Henry Ainley at the age of eighteen, and this is not easy. There are a fair number of good-lookers, but unfortunately when they have the right degree of unsophistication they speak like shop-assistants, and when they speak fair English they look like gigolos. One of them, Robert Eddison, seems to me to fill the bill as far as looks, boyishness, charm, and a cultivated voice go. But, alas, he is six foot three, and his face, though an agreeable mask, is too small for his body and I am afraid would not carry a wig !

In the evening took Jock to the first night of James Bridie's *The Black Eye*, for which I had suggested that he should write a practice dramatic criticism in way of being a dress-rehearsal for his *Manchester Guardian* job which starts next week. He was to write a notice in exactly the same time he will have for the paper, that is to say between the end of the play and twelve midnight. He left me at the theatre, after which I went to supper at the Savoy.

Got home at ten past one and sat down to see what I could do in an hour. Only I cheated, because there was all that ruminating over supper, and in addition I took two hours, if you count getting up out of bed three times in order to add finishing touches !

Oct. 12 *Saturday.* Jock's article arrived with the midnight post-mark showing he kept his word. Excellent, though bearing slight traces of stage-fright. He confessed this morning to having been momentarily tempted to return to Scotland for good by the midnight train. But he can teach me nothing about fright, for I suffered from it in Manchester for ten years *and never got any better*. Never once throughout the whole of those ten years did I go to a play without something written in advance, which I used or not according to circumstances. The difficulty, of course, is that of trying too hard and attempting too much. It takes pretty nearly the whole of fifty minutes merely to write the number of words it takes to make half-a-column, never mind the four-fold job of telling the reader about the play as news, fulfilling the critical function, using the right words, and—last infirmity of noble mind—putting something of yourself into the whole thing. Writers either have this gift or they haven't, and a man is not the worse critic for not possessing it. Montague and Walkley had this gift absolutely, and so to-day have Charles Morgan and Ivor Brown. But I know one very distinguished critic, the possessor of an exquisite mind and whose weekly outpourings are pure joy, who has been tried at this nocturnal job and spent his hour gaping like a fish at a blank sheet of paper. If Jock fails, which he may very well do, it won't be a failure in criticism or artistry. It will simply mean that he lacks a facility often denied the best brains and granted to the most commonplace. The reason I didn't altogether fail on *The Manchester Guardian* was that I sedulously collected the London criticisms of each new play as it appeared and so knew what it was about before it came to Manchester. From these I prepared my advance notices, and, further, provincial papers go to press an hour later than the London ones. I therefore had two hours, and not one, for the task—an immense difference.

However, Jock's first attempt was very much better than I expected, though not so good as it would have been if the time-threat had been removed. Bits of it are very good indeed:

One went to the new play hoping at last for Mr. Bridie's rounded, complete thing, a play with a " total gesture." Alas, no ! It was evident early in the evening that he was going to make even more little gestures than usual, one gesture per scene and the whole totalling nothing.

Also:

Mr. Morland Graham's appearance was all too short; he perfectly suggested the typical north-country father extremely nervous of allowing his heart to get nearer his sleeve than his elbow, so to speak.

Also:

The moral of the whole thing, if it is a whole thing, is so trite than I cannot remember it.

These are not only good criticisms, but tellingly delivered, and only once does Jock go off into his preciosity as when he says that Shaw was in the audience, each particular hair of his beard *candid* with approbation ! He justifies this nonsense by saying that he is using " candid " in its pristine sense, whereupon we trot out Webster. Jock claims a win on the strength of the quotation from Dryden:

> The box receives all black: but, poured from thence,
> The stones come candid forth, the hue of innocence.

Whereupon I point to a small word in italics which he disingenuously overlooks. The word is *obs.* ! A great argument follows. He is to write this week about *Romeo and Juliet*, and I ask him if he thinks the *M.G.* will allow him to call this " the world's greatest venereal tragedy."

He tells me that the moment he had posted his stuff last night all sorts of witty things came bubbling up in his mind. I told him therefore to sign his articles " E. d'E.," and when people ask what it stands for to tell them " Esprit d'Escalier ! "

Oct. 13 *Sunday.* Came across an old story of Sarah which I had quite forgotten. Landing at New Orleans she hailed a taxi and said to the astonished driver: " A la forêt vierge ! " using, I suppose, very much the same accent and gesture with which, in *L'Aiglon*, she would say:

" J'empoigne la crinière. Alea jacta est ! " The " r's " in " forêt " and " vierge " deep down in the throat, something between rutting tigress and strangled dove.

Oct. 15 *Tuesday.* Readers are hopeless. On Sunday I began my article on Bridie's new comedy which, as usual, is all over the place: " *Harum-scarúmque cano* is becoming more and more Mr. Bridie's motto." I am convinced that nobody twigged this. About la Mosheim I wrote: " What I am getting at is that if you were to hear Miss Bergner, Miss Mannheim, and Miss Grete Mosheim, the newcomer, on the stage and all behind screens, and get them to say the sentence in turn, it would be very difficult to tell instantly which actress was speaking. I know that this will be disputed, and I have before me the Awful Warning of the musical critics who pretend that from the first bar of the well-known Tschaikowsky Piano Concerto—or even from the first four bars !—they could blindly deduce Orloff, Moiseiwitsch, or me ! "

This drew a letter from Leo Pavia:

> " Ihre Akkorde sind miserabel ! " said that dreadful Madame Essipoff, second wife of Prof. Leschetitzky. This apropos of the straight diatonic chords in Chopin's Bolero op. 19. Certainly, when *she* played the same chords, they sounded marvellous. My chords were anæmic and lifeless, but the chords of that horrible old witch would have raised the dead.

Oct. 16 *Wednesday.* Moray McLaren 'phoned to tell me he had been to see Otway's *The Soldier's Fortune* and had found it delicious, " like an indecent air by Mozart."

Lunched at the Ivy and introduced Jock to St. John Ervine and Lennox Robinson as Ivor's successor on *The Manchester Guardian.* I am experiencing all the sensations of the proud father, though Jock says I look and cluck like a hen who has laid her first egg. Coming down Primrose Hill saw a perfect Manet, three French nuns in total black walking against a background of trees.

Tea was brought in this afternoon by Fred in shirt-sleeves

and braces followed at the proper distance by the new chauffeur, both entirely serious. All the pomp and circumstance of a collation at Henry James's Branches, yet with the visual aspect of Laurel and Hardy.

Oct. 17 *Thursday.* Gielgud's production to-night of *Romeo and Juliet* puts Jock on his mettle and me as well. Taking a line through Juliet's punning speech:

I am not I, unless I wipe Jock's eye !

Oct. 18 *Friday.* The boy in a great stew this morning because his notice is not in the London edition of *The Manchester Guardian*. I say that this often happens with a longish article, and Ivor Brown confirms on the telephone. A. D. insufficiently assured, however, and I spend the day dictating to a lone, lorn creetur who could give points to Mrs. Gummidge. Other people have had their articles turned down, but he feels it more than most !

In the meantime am vastly jealous of Darlington's grand article in the *Telegraph* in which he says that Edith Evans's Nurse is " as earthy as a potato, as slow as a cart-horse, and as cunning as a badger ! "

In the evening dined at Claridge's with Korda and Charles Laughton and attended the first conference on the new *Cyrano* film. Also present two other people whose names I did not catch but whom I took to be a Czecho-Slovakian secretary and an English publicity-man. Found myself running hopelessly counter to Charles, who was in his ultra-highbrow mood and objected to any and every version of *Cyrano* which did not combine all Rostand's wit and all Rostand's poetry. I felt like suggesting that he should dig up and commission Congreve, but had the sense to keep my mouth shut. This went on for a long time and Korda kept his temper throughout, merely telling Charles that when he is being filmed whether he thinks about " dramatic fluidity " or cream cheese doesn't matter, as it's the photographer who counts ! Nothing whatever was arrived at and we broke up at 11.30, good temper being more or less restored. Charles, who is a great baby as well as a genius, delightedly showed us the mechanical

arrangements for Cyrano's cock-a-hoop bearing which are to enable him to give all his attention to Cyrano's crowing. He is to have the heels of his shoes shaved and the soles raised, and illustrated this by means of two books which Korda threw on the floor. One was Lytton Strachey, and the other Eisenstein !

Apropos of an actress for Roxane, at bare mention of whom I shrieked in protest, Korda said: " But I shall only let her loose for ten seconds at a time." Cedric Hardwicke told me the other day that film-producers, landed with a dud film-star, will pay huge sums to an actor with a stage reputation. The idea is that contiguity with a genuine player will give the film-dud the air of being a player also; the public sees a lot of polished playing and can't remember who did it. Korda told us of two friends of his youth, inhabitants of the little Hungarian village in which he was born. One was a man of sixty who wore a long smock of the kind we see in Russian plays. He was the village idiot, and his mania took the form of going up to strangers, lifting his smock, and saying: " This is what I've got ! " Korda added thoughtfully: " He had the face of a saint," and Charles said quickly: " That's what saints are like ! "

His other friend was an older idiot who wore no fewer than five hundred neckties and had his pockets stuffed with thousands of envelopes to which he always referred as " my deeds." You could not make him happier than by giving him an old envelope which he would add to his store. " He died at the age of eighty-seven," said Korda, " much respected ! "

Oct. 19 *Saturday.* Here is Jock's article which appeared this morning—the first serious and, with the exception of a few lines about a silly play, the first article he has written for *The Manchester Guardian*:

> Mr. John Gielgud's production of *Romeo and Juliet* was triumphantly launched at the New Theatre last night. He has taken this tragedy of mischance and produced it almost, in the geometrical sense, as far as it will go. He has produced it, as Hamlet would have reformed—he has produced

it " altogether." The play was already a masterpiece of compression; it has been compressed further without cutting, but with the use of an ingenious double stage which is successful once one has accepted the convention whereby the same cubicle is Capulet's loggia, a tavern, a friar's cell, a chemist's shop, and Tybalt's grave. Once again Mr. Gielgud has engaged for his designs the clever and resourceful young ladies called Motley. The setting is discreetly adaptable to the play's swift progress so that there are no waits and but one interval. Thus is the tragedy's note which is impetuousness emphasised.

Many of the costumes are delightful and all of them have that bright new laundered cleanness which one has long had to accept in stage sixteenth century. The action is thoroughly well ordered, the duels have their right spirit of hot nights and the mad blood stirring. The pace is throughout impassioned, and in the charnel-house conclusion is that " glooming peace " noticed by the much-awakened Prince.

There remain the players. Mr. Gielgud to begin with was his own Mercutio and produced him at least as well as anybody or anything else. The part was spoken with rare virtuosity. Pater has said that the greatest art tends to escape into the condition of music. It was so last night. With this actor's delivering of the Queen Mab lines they became a scherzo, the words fluttering from Mercutio's brain as lightly as the elfin vision that they drew. Even the death scene, following hard upon, and made the more poignant by the vitality with which this Mercutio had been sketched, was hardly more moving than the famous speech. Miss Evans was heavenly as the Nurse, playing with great humour and immense vocal range, and endowing the unvenerable bawd with an apple's hard sweetness.

But then this play should belong not to these two stars but to that pair of star-crossed lovers. Mr. Laurence Olivier and Miss Peggy Ashcroft would perhaps have been happier in their tragedy with a less formidable backing. Miss Ashcroft's Juliet was charming at the least but never more than touching at the most. In the great solo scene Juliet is aflame with her deep-down desires; Miss Ashcroft showed only the trembling surfaces. Mr. Olivier began with the advantage of looking like a handsome young Italian, which is much. As the evening wore on, too, Mr. Olivier reached

expectation, then proceeded to surpass it. The part is notoriously difficult, and all the great chances are given to the heroine.

Greeted at Mantua with news of his wife's death, Romeo has but a single line to indicate first grief and then resignation: " Is it e'en so ? Then I defy thee, stars." He must go on instantly to talk of hiring horses and then with hardly a break proceed to enumerate the contents of the apothecary's shop. Mr. Olivier was best of all at this triple hurdle, giving the big line the correct significance and isolation. His fault is a marked deficiency in poetry.

Some of the lesser parts were exceptionally well played, the lesser the better. Peter was comically individualised by Mr. George Devine, and there was a goodly drawing by Mr. Alec Guinness of the Apothecary. But why does the last always have Romeo's poison in his pocket ready to hand ? And, incidentally, why does Shakespeare make him fuss so much at being paid ? Perhaps in Mantua the chemists were not cash.

A. D.

I doubt very much whether Walkley did better than this at his first attempt. Technically it is faultless, except in two places which I duly, and maliciously, point out. The first is the use of the same word " moving " to express two different kinds of emotion which have nothing to do with each other, the emotion produced by beautiful speech, and that produced by somebody's dying. The second is the use of the word " heavenly " for the Nurse, who is immediately afterwards described as " an unvenerable bawd." I tell Jock that there are no bawds, venerable or otherwise, in Heaven. The joke in the last sentence is infuriatingly good. But I must school myself to this. It is one thing to aim at owning the world's best ponies; I cannot expect to corner all the wit. Anyhow I think enough of the article to write Ivor Brown as follows:

Happy if belated thought ! In the matter of A. D. your brain is proving the female to my soul. Perhaps in view of the fact that I have borne him for nine years, this should be the other way about. Genius, you know, is long in gestation.

An article about my horses appeared in to-day's *Country Life*. I turned the difficulty of writing this rather neatly:

> Must a man not laugh at his own jest? asked Charles Lamb in mock indignation. Must he "sit esurient at his own table, and commend the flavour of his venison upon the absurd strength of his never touching it himself"? Would Miss Ruth Draper depute somebody else to show you round her garden? Must a man refuse to take a guest round his stables on the pretence that he does not think much of his own horses? Must I, in short, forbear to say a word about the equine marvels whose pictures are here presented? There was once a man who claimed to be the world's smallest giant; I modestly boast of possessing the world's smallest Hackney stud.

The illustration showing me with Ego had this comment:

> Reproduced also is what architectural writers call a "detail," showing the frieze-like beauty of the perfect gentleman. I refer to the horse!

Oct. 20 *Sunday.* At Thorpe Bay. Turned on the wireless at a quarter to two this morning and had the following crooned at me:

> Let's strike the note
> Mendelssohn wrote
> Concerning spring weather,
> And sing it together.

C'est gigantesque! as our old friend Flaubert used to remark, and as I must now have quoted a hundred times.

Oct. 24 *Thursday.* At the Redfern Galleries to-day bought a picture of negresses gathering fruit. About two-thirds life-size. This was painted in Otaheite by a French artist called Koren and brought back by Hugh Walpole. It fills my room with colour, though I think it is more a decoration than a picture. Went on to Coia's exhibition of caricatures and bought one of me. Very good, but pales beside one of Shaw, which is *grand*. As there was no red ticket on this I immediately bagged it.

Two letters which have the merit of contrast:

After your " Theatre Talk " (on Gielgud's production of *Romeo and Juliet*) of last night the only conclusion that one can come to is that you are the possessor of a very small, mean and petty mind.

DEAR SIR,

A thousand thanks for your theatre talk to-night. How wonderful it was to hear the real art of discontent. I do not see that any actor or actress need be sore at being the subject of your discontent. Rather should they emerge from it with a certain pride, as people about whom lightning has played during a storm. I felt sorry for Mr. —— who had to follow you at the microphone. The only person to follow you is Interval.

J. A. M.

Jam indeed!

Oct. 25 *Friday.* Letter from Brother Mycroft to whom I had sent in all innocence a snap of myself golfing at St. Annes:

For the picture of the spoon shot—as a spoon shot—I have nothing but adverse criticism. It is really extraordinarily like a film of Bobby Jones I saw yesterday—his illustration of why 18 handicap men slice, and standing above the ball as you are, well, Heaven knows where the shot went to. You will tell me, of course, that it went 250 yards with a slight hook. Liar! No, seriously, you can't play wooden clubs off your right foot like that. It simply means that your body hasn't worked at all—or if it has then you have swayed 18 inches to the right. That is what makes it look so like a mashie shot. No, I regret to have to say it again, as I have so many times, until you learn shift-turn, shift-turn, instead of what you do now, which is turn-shift, turn-shift, your wooden club shots may get there, but they will always look like iron shots.

It is one of life's mysteries to me that golfers, you for example, will study and think and discuss everything about golf which doesn't matter, and never the one thing which does. You have played golf now for perhaps thirty years and you have also played other games such as real tennis. In the latter you went to endless trouble to learn the correct cut stroke. If you had taken up lawn tennis you would have studied body rotation and not been satisfied until you

had got the secret of *effortless* strokes. If you had been a rowing man you wouldn't have just done it anyhow; you would have got at the secret of the *order* of the complicated movements which occur. In field sports like Hammer, Discus, etc. this sequence is all important and you would have realised it at once. But, my friend, in this 'ere golf, your all-absorbing pastime barring 'ackneys, you don't know to this day the correct order in which the swing is done. And because you get fairly far and fairly straight you think it doesn't matter. You just don't know what you are missing, that's all. I'll tell you this, that with your physique and your opportunities for playing and association with professionals I would give you 50 yards on each tee! It is utterly absurd, as I've told you before, that you can't outdrive those weedy little chaps you play with. It is simply because they swing right and you don't.

This is the last thing I shall tell you about golf,

Yours

WHISKERS.

Oct. 27 Sunday. A dull day, like old age. Have been asking myself how many newspaper readers really read, in the sense of doing more than skim, what one takes so much trouble to write. One of my favourite passages in poetry is:

> She is coming, my own, my sweet;
> Were it ever so airy a tread,
> My heart would hear her and beat,
> Were it earth in an earthy bed;
> My dust would hear her and beat,
> Had I lain for a century dead;
> Would start and tremble under her feet,
> And blossom in purple and red.

This was in my mind when I ended my *Romeo and Juliet* article with this sentence: " One felt that whenever such grief is heard in the theatre, Mrs. Stirling's heart will hear it and beat, though it has lain for a century dead." Surely this means that at whatever future date such grief is heard the old actress's heart will hear it though by that time it may have lain dead a hundred years. The sentence was cast in this form to cover the fact that Mrs. S. has been dead less than the half-century and I know it. Yet to-day I receive a letter from

an extremely cultivated man telling me that he saw Mrs. S.'s Nurse and that he is by no means a hundred! Can he not have read *Maud*? Anyhow I take occasion to point out to Jock that it was foolish to expect any reader to catch the Shakespearean echo in "Offenbach's seasick, weary Barcarolle," which he used in his third article. The fact that *Romeo and Juliet* is very much in the air just doesn't count. By the way, during the week I had a letter from Henry Ainley calling me a brick for remembering his Romeo in my wireless talk. He wants to act again, and then comes this sad little sentence: "But it is good for any artist to taste the loneliness of the wilderness."

Oct. 31 *Thursday.* Last night at the *M.G.* office Jock asked James Bone whether George Mair had been a fastidious journalist. J. B. replied in a whisper: "Man, he once telephoned a semi-colon from Moscow."

Lunched at the Savage with Herman Finck who was in terrific form. He showed me the programme for a forthcoming Sunday concert at Hastings, and when I objected to *Bacchanalia* as being too profane a subject he said: "All right, we'll call it 'John Sebastian Bacchanalia.'"

Nov. 1 *Friday.* What a world!

This morning I find one of our film-critics writing about Hollywood's newest chit:

> That Luise Rainer does, in fact, take her place effortlessly among the great stars of the screen is beyond doubt. It doesn't matter much whether as an actress she has any of the spark of greatness. The first time you see her smile you know that the girl is there.

Te voilà, toi, la Sottise! as Cyrano says. And like him:

> Je sais bien qu'à la fin vous me mettrez à bas;
> N'importe: je me bats! Je me bats! Je me bats!

This young woman, whom I have not yet seen, may, of course, turn out to be a great actress. It is the principle to which I object.

Nov. 3 *Sunday.* This is the age of inefficiency. Talking over the wireless the other evening I said:

I loathe the cant which pretends that people are kept down. In my opinion the only people who are kept down are those who keep themselves down! I used to think that all young people were anxious to get on, and now I know that they are not. Formerly when messenger boys used to arrive to collect my articles I would give them a newspaper to read while they were waiting. I found out that they never looked at it. I asked one boy if he wasn't anxious to improve his mind, and he said, "No, sir!" I asked another what he was thinking about, and he said "Nothing!" I asked a third whether he wanted to get on, and he said he wasn't particular.

This drew the following anonymous communication:

30.10.35.

We cannot pass this last effort. Muddle-headed meanderings prompted by airing your views on an artificial and decadent stage only expose your inflated self-importance and get us nowhere.

We, who live reasonable civilised lives, know your type to our sorrow. Always wanting the world to dance to your fiddling; helpless when dealing with simple things like telephones, restaurants and railways; late for meals and upsetting your fellows by everlastingly interfering with their business.

Especially, what right have you to ask lads about their intimate lives? Had they touched their forelocks and said, "Yes, Sir, thank you; Sir, I read the papers whenever I can, I mean to get on, I hope to be an editor one day," would that have pleased you? Naturally they said to themselves, "Why doesn't the old fool get his copy ready in time, and save me a wigging when I get back?" So, being polite lads, they shut up like oysters, wishing you would let them fulfil their function in life.

Next time, give us a list of the things you really like and we will avoid them like poison. Obviously I should not write were I not of opinion that you have enough intelligence to mend your ways, and if I had not some sense of gratitude for your cheery drivellings on your own topic. Stick to your last, shoemaker or rather snob!

All the same the craze for inaccuracy continues unabated. A cloak-room attendant at the Café Royal swore to me to-day that all glasses had to be off the table by 2.30. He has been there seven years! But that's not all. At this afternoon's Palladium concert the writer of the analytical notes cheerfully sets down:

> What great events from little causes rise.

and is presumably quite content with his shot at Pope's:

> What dire offence from amorous causes springs,
> What mighty contests rise from trivial things.

Last. I begin one of my *S.T.* paragraphs to-day:

> "The plot of this play is not a very convincing affair concerning the utter eventlessness of nine p.m. At this hour . . ."

Every edition had "at this home" until, at eleven o'clock last night, I was fortunate enough to catch up the mistake. And they ask me to subscribe to printers' charities and attend their dinners! I would sooner boil the whole lot of them alive and drink the soup. I feel that when Charles Dickens made Mrs. Crummles the Original Blood-drinker he was thinking of printer's blood. Shelley also, in the matter of Old Cenci's draught. Probably Tamora's sons, made into a paste by Titus Andronicus, began life as compositors. At least I hope so.

Nov. 9 *Saturday.* A hell of a week, of which I remember:

1. Broadcasting about Sybil, and on the theme that if she is great enough to be a Dame she must remain a *grande dame*. The point is not that S. should resist characters like Pinero's Lady Orreyed, but something much more subtle. If she went outside herself on such occasions I should have nothing to say. But there was a time when, although utterly free from any vulgarity of mind, S. had certain provincial elegances, mouth-twistings, arm-wavings and the like, *to which she returns for her comedy*. It is this that I find deplorable—the renewal of something long and successfully

put behind her. Her performances in *Advertising April* and *Madame Plays Nap* left me *bouche béante*, and here it is again.

2. After broadcasting, dinner at Isola Bella with Maurice Healy, a most amusing cove, brilliant talker, and author of this fine epigram:

> To the Memory of the 29th Division.
> We failed; but, when the sacrifice is needed,
> Fail you as nobly. We shall have succeeded.

A grand meal—oysters, minute steak, and toasted cheese—and the talk best of all. Moray McLaren in fine Scots form, while M. H., who began talking in English, finished up in Arthur Sinclair's richest brogue.

3. The Opening Lunch of the *S.T.* Book Exhibition. Rose Macaulay coming up to me and saying: " Sir, a bone to pick with you," and me countering with the Hamlet-like: " Madam, a whole skeleton ! "

4. Talking at the Exhibition, with Sybil Thorndike in the chair. Charming to me, and looking and behaving like some female seraph, exactly what Coleridge meant by " a man all light."

5. Supper with James Bone at the Café Royal. J. B. in tremendous fettle. Stories about George Mair coming into the newly-decorated Savoy Hotel, all white paint and panelling, and saying " This place would be exactly like the Berengaria *if only it were a bit steadier* ! " About T. W. H. Crosland refusing tea at one of Lady Londonderry's political fêtes, ordering a bottle of whisky from the footman, writing his name on the label and putting it on the drawing-room mantelpiece for his private use. About the late Sir Edward Hulton, who had in his library twelve sumptuously-bound volumes lettered " Grand National Shakespeare."

6. A first-rate concert on my new wireless, *which works* ! B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton Harty conducting:

Strauss's *Don Juan.*

Chopin *Concerto No.* 1 (Hofmann).

William Walton's 1*st Symphony.*

Why do pianists so seldom play the Chopin *Concerto*, which is lovely ? Fascinated by the Walton, though one must not

hear too much of this new stuff. Matisse & Co. make one look at Constable a shade patronisingly, and I'm not going to risk listening to Beethoven with amused contempt.

7. Swopping my old Dunlop and cheque for ten guineas against the best of the new Dunlops in the show at the Redfern Galleries, the portrait of a wistful little boy.

8. Hearing Richard Hearne, the amazing acrobat in the new Henson show, tell Duggie Furber that he couldn't stay late at the Savage Club unless he 'phoned his mother. Everybody admired this.

9. Agreeing with Jock that in comparison with Rosalind's pure flame Juliet is a man-struck little besom.

10. Being told by Ion Swinley that as the result of my article on the speaking of Shakespeare's verse, Lilian Baylis is arranging for young actors to have their vowels opened at least once a week.

Peters writes from Hollywood:

> Hollywood is just as fantastic as I expected, just as slow, just as confused and muddle-headed. It is astonishing that they get anything finished, and that the pictures they make are no worse than they are. It is a lotus-eating kind of life, in which everybody pretends to be working twenty-four hours a day, and very quickly comes to believe that he is. I've seen Hugh Walpole once or twice. He enjoys the life Hughly, and skilfully conveys the impression that preparing a film script of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is work of international importance. No doubt you will view and review the result in due course and give your opinion of that prodigy Freddie Bartholomew, whose Jewish features naturally make him the obvious choice for the part.
>
> At one place I walked in at an awkward moment. One hundred and twenty-five people had just been sacked, and the head of the story department, sitting alone in a vast building of empty rooms, was so clearly awaiting execution that he could not attend to me at all. He had one eye on the telephone and the other on the door, uncertain as to where the fatal message would come from. But I gather they have raised another five million dollars and the production of masterpieces continues. Sherriff is here, and Whale. I lunched with both. The talk was not of the good

old days in England, but exclusively of films. There is no other conversation here.

Letter from an unknown friend at Brighton who writes apropos of beards:

> I find mine expensive. There are so few barbers nowadays who know how to trim one, I used to have to go all the way to Portsmouth but the *artiste en cheveux* died and I was " up a tree." Fortunately I discovered another at Hove so it's a bit cheaper.
>
> My theatre days were, alas! when you were in long clothes in the early '80's and I had the advantage of living in Paris and seeing *la divine* Sarah. I just missed seeing her throw her furniture out of window in a tantrum, which she did a minute or two before I arrived to lunch with friends who lived opposite her in the Quartier Monceau.

Is it, or is it not, the business of a diarist to collect, and hope to give a little longer life to, things which might otherwise be lost? Here is something exquisite—part of *The Times* obituary notice of the late Charles Francis Vachell, K.C.

> In him the Bar loses a humorist of a rare type. Unhappily he was little known to the public, for his practice in the High Court was not great and his questions to witnesses and his comments on evidence were not of the kind to find a place in the newspapers, followed by " laughter " in brackets. They were too exquisite, too delicately slender for that. Laughter in its common sense and he were strangers. An ordinary Court guffaw would hurt him immeasurably. Were a bludgeon joke raised against him his only answer was a thin-toned murmur of " Well, well." An ascetic little man with high-power spectacles and imperturbable features, a fine-drawn voice, and careful accents, he created no expectancy of a smile. Yet when he spoke he would strike the grace-notes of humour, seeming—but only seeming—ever to be unaware of the daintiness of their *timbre*.
>
> He was sometimes retained in breach of promise actions, and when he pleaded the cause of broken hearts Queen Mab was with him to work enchanting mischief. At times, by the use of an Elizabethan word and a punctilious, almost

euphuistic, style of speech, he would conjure up an archaic atmosphere of romance, ludicrously compelling the imagination to transmute a South London suburb into a *pleasaunce* with rue and rosemary and sweet marjoram. During cross-examination his assumption of a monastic unfamiliarity with the world would betray a witness by ridicule into follies and even into tears. It is unfortunate that his witticisms and humorous sayings have not been preserved in written form; they will be remembered by his colleagues at the Bar long after much of the rough-and-tumble jocularity which generally begets laughter in Court has been forgotten.

An idea of the subtleness of his wit may be gained from an example. On one occasion he was cross-examining a witness named Tyrrel. " Your family has always had an honourable record ? " he asked. " Certainly," replied the witness. " Nothing against your grandfather, or your great-grandfather, or any of your forbears ? "—" Nothing." " That was merely an unfortunate accident in the New Forest, eh ? " said Vachell (referring to the death of William Rufus). His humour was not curbed even in the Court of Appeal. He appeared there once on behalf of a woman who was well known on the music-hall stage, and in opening the appeal he said: " My Lords, it is proper that you should be acquainted with the nature of my client's repertoire. It included a song called ' Venus.' My Lords, it was a costume song."

If I do not " collect " this, who will ?

The week ends with the purchase by Fred Leigh of a tortoise-shell coal-scuttle so hideous that even a tortoise-shell cat would hesitate to have kittens in it.

Nov. 10 *Sunday.* George Mathew continually astonishes me. To-day he used the word " esurient." I have heard my father say " eleemosynary " and Violet Hunt " ineluctable." Now only " jocund " remains. George maintained to-day that Bach has only two tunes, one grave and the other gay. He went even further and insisted that the gay tune was only the grave one played faster.

Nov. 11 *Monday.* Received this good letter from R. H. Gretton:

Chalfont St. Giles,
9th November, 1935.

DEAR AGATE,

" Who is this fellow," you will say, " who begins his letter without a ' Mr.,' and yet whose handwriting I don't know ? " Well, we *were* on the *M.G.* together, though you were in Manchester then, and I at " the London end," and we did meet, and as far as I know the only person in a newspaper entity who is addressed as " Mr. So & So " is the head printer. So I don't say " Mr."

The origin of this letter is that when reading *Ego* I found a cherished recollection disturbed. You give a quotation from Pinero's *Iris* as " Champagne's my wine." Surely, surely it was port ? The recollection is cherished because of the delightful delivery of the line, the beautifully subtle drawled " i " sounds, so much more truly Cockney than the exaggeration one generally gets from the stage. And I think that for that girl at that period, port would be right. Champagne, in that sort of connection, comes later, doesn't it ? However, I've an uncomfortable feeling that you probably have the published play and looked it up, and that I must be wrong.

But besides the particular origin of this letter, I found other things to write about. Firstly, you can't imagine how impressed I was by your revelation that you began on the *M.G.* as an elegant trifler in the enjoyment of three or four thousand a year. Somehow I never associated such possibilities with the first appearance of the initials J. E. A. in the august company of C. E. M. and A. N. M. Three or four thousand—— Good lord !

Secondly, I do like your way of mentioning what you had to eat from time to time. I do hate those people who get you to the door of a restaurant—or even to their own table—and then leave out the *only* interesting thing. One can eat actually but a limited quantity of food. The least that a writer can do for us is the pleasant extension of greed that can be achieved by reading of what other people have eaten.

Thirdly, some remark of yours about C. P. S. as editor made me want to boast to you that I once got the word " rutilant " into the *M.G.* *not* in italics as a French word, but in plain Roman type. What do you think of that ? I used it for the blue colour in the clerestory windows of

Canterbury Cathedral. True, C. P. S. sent me a gentle protest afterwards. Indeed, you raised a host of memories of stuff that I worked off on the *M.G.* which now makes me hot with blushes in retrospect—great sounding surging stuff that a young man loves to chuck about. I remember particularly a positively shameful half-column or so on the burial of Swinburne. (You see, I was at Oxford in the early 'nineties, and I never shall shake off " where the sea without shore is " and all the rest of it.) I don't wonder that I had to go.

Fourthly, I was so glad to see A. N. M. getting some of his due in your book. I knew him even before I was on the *M.G.* and I once visited with him the old father to whom he was so expressionlessly attached. It's marvellous how he still goes on. I only see the weekly *M.G.* now, but there he always is, quite unmistakable with his guarded, yet oddly explosive, judgments, and the kind of sentence that brings back to mind that extraordinary abrupt bark which he used sometimes as a laugh. Do you ever see him now? He took the chair at a little dinner when I left the *M.G.* and predicted for me much the sort of life I have led.

By the way, I hope you were as irritated as I was by Elton's Memoir of C. E. M. It was so *lazy*. The only way to do C. E. M. would have been by a laborious using of the *M.G.* files. Elton simply fell back on the novels. It maddened me, because here was a chance to do a magnificent *journalist*. And after all C. E. M. loved his *M.G.* work, and his novels were only a plaything.

I should gather from the end of *Ego* that you may be living not so very far from here. If you ever turn this way in whatever may be your latest acquisition in cars, it would be most pleasant to see you. Indeed I shouldn't be surprised if you did occasionally come to this very village, since I should think you and Mr. Bertram Mills must often have met, and perhaps been rivals, at horse shows, and he is credibly said to live in this place, though I don't know where.

Yours very sincerely,
R. H. GRETTON.

I quite agree about Elton's book. I was furious when it came out, not only because it left out all C. E. M.'s dramatic criticism, but because it has made any other book on C. E. M.

impossible. A literary dog-in-the-mangerpiece. The point about Gretton's letter is that it is from *him* to *me*. Anybody can write to anybody about Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold; there are very few people who can write or be written to about Montague and Monkhouse!

In the evening attended the Dinner of the Circle of Nineteenth Century motorists as Harry Preston's guest, and as he was not feeling up to the mark made his speech for him. It appears H. P. gave W. G. Grace his first motor-ride. Also present a gay old boy of ninety-one who fought in the Crimean war as an eleven-year-old naval cadet.

Nov. 13 *Wednesday.* "Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?" was Jock's way of asking me to lunch at the Café Royal. Just as we had got nicely settled a young man came up, asked if I was Agate, ordered the rest of his meal to be transferred to our table, sat down and talked for an hour on his difficulties as a playwright. I suppose the idea that two people might want to lunch together quietly and without interruption is beneath to-day's contempt. My fault for not cutting him short.

Nov. 16 *Saturday.* Saw once more the film of *Journey's End* and once more enormously impressed. Stanhope, Osborne, Trotter and the batman have become a part of one's life, Raleigh less so.

Nov. 17 *Sunday.* Palladium and Moiseiwitsch. The *Adieux* Sonata of Beethoven of which I am a little tired. Then some Chopin—the lovely Scherzo in E Major, No. 4, and a grand performance of the Funeral March Sonata. I think this was the first time I ever really heard the slow movement. It may have been the result of the *Journey's End* film following upon the Armistice Day stuff of Monday last, but never before have I been so conscious of the tread of feet. The second subject was of heaven without being sentimentalised, and the return to the first subject correctly shocking. Pious hopes are all very well, it seemed to say, but we've got to get this intolerable thing out of sight.

Nov. 18 *Monday.* *Timon of Athens* at the Westminster. A bad, dull play to be forgiven for such passages as:

> But say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood;
> Who once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover.

And:

> Though thou abhorr'dst in us our human griefs,
> Scorn'dst our brain's flow and those our droplets which
> From niggard nature fall, yet rich conceit
> Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
> On thy low grave, on faults forgiven.

Both passages are Shakespeare's high-water mark.

Started a collection of all my old essays on Hackneys, cricket, golf, prize-fighters, etc. The whole to be refurbished and given shape with the title *Kingdoms for Horses.*

Nov. 21 *Thursday.* Driving back from lunch to-day had an attack of nerves. At Oxford Circus was on my death-bed, going up Great Portland Street was dead and buried, along Albany Street calculated estate available after insurances raked in, horses sold and debts paid, passing Stanhope Terrace made my will, ascended Primrose Hill and descended to the Everlasting Bonfire simultaneously, and as we turned into England's Lane was critically considering Jock's first article as my successor on the *S.T.*

All this turned out, of course, to be merely what Doctor Rutty, the Irish Quaker, called " an hypochondriack obnubilation from wind and indigestion."

Nov. 24 *Sunday.* Palladium. First appearance of the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra which has very fine strings and poor brass, like the tearing of brown paper. Vaclav Talich looks like a Gordon Craig wood-cut of a marionette. Eight Slavonic Dances in succession are too many; the rhythm palls. Also not very fond of Dvořák's *Carneval Overture* or his *G Major Symphony* (No. 4). The truth is that one can't do with a whole afternoon of a little master.

In the evening dined with Herbert Morgan and party at

the Reform Club, whose empty halls make a sad spectacle. Is it possible that Liberalism is extinct? Can the god die and the temple not fall down?

During dinner I wished we had been living a hundred years ago, for then I could have reminded the company of a highly relevant passage in Hazlitt's great article on Mrs. Siddons. I could have sent to the library for Hazlitt and read aloud: "In that prodigious prosing paper, *The Times*, which seems to be written as well as printed by a steam-engine, Mr. Kemble is compared to the ruin of a magnificent temple, in which the divinity still resides. This is not the case. The temple is unimpaired; but the divinity is sometimes from home."

Nov. 25 *Monday.* It is known, indeed I boast of it, that as a hay-purchasing officer in the Bouches-du-Rhône I was, throughout the entire war, further from gunfire than any other British officer. This explains Reggie Pound's devastating interruption when I was holding forth at the Club to-day about going to war to stop Germany's ill-treatment of Jews and my willingness to enlist:

R.P. "Nonsense, James. Tanks don't eat hay!"

Nov. 26 *Tuesday.* Reviewing Tomlinson's *Mars his Idiot* I find something quoted simply as "A letter in *The Manchester Guardian* during the Boer War." Some Bishop clacking about the virtue-inciting properties of a cannonade, had called it an "oratorio," and the letter-writer comments:

> Nor do I say with some that peace is wholly bad. Even amid the horrors of peace you will find little shoots of character fed by the gentle and timely rains of plague and famine, tempest and fire; simple lessons of patience and courage conned in the schools of typhus, gout and stone; not oratorios, perhaps, but homely anthems and rude hymns played on knife and probe in the long winter nights . . . Every year thousands who would once have been braced and steeled by manly tussles with small-pox or diphtheria are robbed of that blessing by the great changes made in our drains. Every year thousands of women and children

must go their way bereft of the rich spiritual experience of the widow and the orphan.

Only one pen, Montague's, could have written this.

Nov. 27 *Wednesday.* Mary Jerrold's grand-daughter, Penelope, aged five months and starting life in the next flat, has a charming Danish nurse, butter-coloured hair, white of egg complexion. Last night at one o'clock in the morning found her awaiting the arrival of me or somebody to let her in: " Zey promised to leave ze front door open—but somebody has *smacked* it ! "

There is a charming frankness and absence of shyness about the girl. This afternoon she proffered a request through her baby's mother, who is the wife of Clive Morton, the actor. Her own mother was to broadcast a talk to-night from Copenhagen, and could she listen on my wireless? So Fred twiddled, and the hall-porter whom we dub Stepan twiddled, and we all twiddled and finally got Copenhagen. After which we retired and shut the girl up with her mother, her subsequent gratitude being very pretty.

Nov. 28 *Thursday.* Nobody objects to the younger generation knocking at the door, though I feel obliged to tell Jock that twice in one morning is overdoing it. To-day's *M.G.* has his notice of *Distinguished Gathering*, Tuesday night's play at the St. Martin's, and *Our Own Lives*, last night's play at the Ambassadors. I really don't know which is the better of the two. The first has this: " An expert cast of a dozen or so is headed by Mr. Frank Vosper in a blue velvet dinner-jacket, and acting, as it were, uncrushably." The adverb exactly conveys V.'s silky accents and sleek self-satisfied smile. I am suggesting to Jock that we should patent and put on the market a new brand of velvet to be called Vospereen. In the second play there was a family of trippers which for its annual outing had exchanged Southend for the Venetian Lido. Jock says about them: " Clearly this is a family which has never been out of bawling distance of the

longest pier in England. Nor has it ever entered any gondola unattached to eleven others on a merry-go-round."

I cannot compete with this, and the question now is how to keep the knowledge of Jock's excellence from the *S.T.* until I have signed my next contract two years hence! Alternatively, I might insure with Lloyd's. Shall in no case appeal to Jock's generosity, since being Scotch he has none.

Nov. 30 *Saturday.* The last thing Hadley did on leaving the *S.T.* office to-night was to cut out of my notice of Gertrude Jennings's *Our Own Lives* this surely harmless bit of nonsense:

> In my view the only tolerable parts of this play are its Cockney absurdities. About the sentimental problem I feel inclined to echo what Thomas Rymer wrote about the tragedy of *Othello* rather more than two hundred years ago: "There is in this Play some burlesk, some humour and ramble of Comical Wit, some shew and some *Mimickry* to divert the spectators; but the tragical part is plainly none other than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour."

I am comforted to think that Scotland, parts of Ireland and the whole of Montgomeryshire are not to be deprived of this reasonable joke which got into the early editions of the paper.

Dec. 1 *Sunday.* Drove George Mathew to Beaconsfield where he made an enormous tea, paying for it with the remark:

"Haven't you realised that Torquay and Cheltenham, Buxton and Harrogate are *bulging* with old ladies waiting to buy the next Beverley Nichols?"

Made an important decision to-day. This is to stop smoking cigars, at any rate until Christmas. Must do something about these blinking nerves.

Dec. 2 *Monday.* Kyllmann has sent me *Rubber Truncheon*, published by Constable and being an account of thirteen months spent in German concentration camps by

Wolfgang Langhoff, an Aryan actor well known in Königsberg, Hamburg, Berlin, Wiesbaden and Düsseldorf. Does the Boche still talk of " unser Shakespeare " ? This book has a couple of pages which I take to be up to the *King Lear* standard of pathos. They tell the story of a young Jew:

He had been arrested in Düsseldorf because he had distributed leaflets. By profession he was a hall-porter in a small city hotel. He was an illiterate, good-natured, always friendly young chap who had not the faintest idea of politics. He had neither relatives nor acquaintances, not a soul cared for him or sent him a food-parcel. The comrades looked after him, and he was attached to one of the " parcel-groups." The comrades always divided themselves into groups and shared between them all that was sent to them from home. In this way those who would otherwise have had very little received an equal share.

This young Jew looked exactly like one of the Nazi-caricatures of a Jew: he had a huge nose, bandy legs, black frizzy hair, and stooped badly. In the old police-uniform with a brimless cap on his head, he was really a pitiable figure. But he had marvellous eyes. Rarely have I seen anyone with such radiant, shining, good-natured eyes.

The crime for which he was flung into solitary confinement was as follows:

One day in the lavatory of our hut we talked about the confinement-hut, and he said:

" In the bunker in Düsseldorf it was better than here. We had a palliasse each anyway."

An S.S.-man standing at the window of the lavatory heard this remark, and at once the Jew was marched off for attempted " incitement " and " mutiny."

He remained for weeks in solitary confinement. Daily he was beaten, tormented, cross-examined. Later they led him nearly every day to the medical hut. His wounds—holes in his buttocks as big as a fist—did not heal. I saw him there as I had to go there once myself to have a boil treated. They had shaved his head. He was already confused in his mind and talked all kinds of rambling nonsense. With a friendly smile he allowed them to pour iodine over his wounds as he did not feel any pain.

In a short while he was completely insane. He could no

longer keep himself clean, and every morning someone else had to wash out the cell he had fouled.

Some of the S.S.-men amused themselves by leading him through the camp and telling him it was Jerusalem. With a transfigured smile the poor fellow looked at the huts.

" See, here's the Temple ! " He knelt down on the steps of the hut and prayed.

" Do you like Jerusalem ? "

" Of course—very much ! "

His whole being radiated such goodness, he talked so kindly to the S.S.-men who went wild with laughter, that we, watching this incident, could not restrain our tears.

I do not know anything more about him except that he was transferred with another batch to Brandenburg, and from Brandenburg sent into a lunatic asylum.

Dec. 3 Part of my broadcast last night:
Tuesday.

Since my last talk I have received any number of beauty hints which, since they appear in print, are presumably read. And that's the horror of it ! Here is one: " Not every woman realises that it is cruelty to faces to try to cover their sorrowful ' hang-over ' with rouge and powder without first giving them the kind of pick-me-up which on these occasions is indicated. . . . Spread a coat of feeding cream over the skin. Massage with firm strokes upwards from the throat, using a fan-like movement over the face. Flick rather than stroke the skin, with a quick ' whippy ' rhythm. . . . Then lie down with the feet raised on the pillows, a hard cushion in the small of the back, *and the head slightly hanging over the side of the bed.* Stay completely relaxed."

Some of you are probably wondering what on earth this has got to do with the theatre. I will tell you. The other evening I had an experience in the theatre of the kind of fool who indulges in antics of this sort. The play was Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*—not a favourite play of mine or of anybody's, but a play at the end of which Shakespeare's poetic genius sounds the depths of pessimism.

Now, listeners, permit me to tell you that while this part of the play was being performed in the revival at the Westminster Theatre, a woman in my neighbourhood opened a vanity bag the size of an attaché-case, spread out

a lot of little pots and pans on her knee, and began to daub her face with all kinds of pencils and cover it with powder. Am I not right in suggesting that this is the kind of a woman who spends the morning with her head hanging over the side of a bed ? And that it is for such creatures that musical comedies are written ?

The whole thing makes me boil with rage, and I warn the entire sex that if at a serious play any tray of cosmetics is again exposed within my reach I shall sweep it to the floor ! Alternatively, I have a small portable shaving-set which I propose to fix on the back of the stall in front of me. But there, it's no good getting cross, and I must cultivate a more philosophic attitude.

This morning I received a letter from which I cull the following:

The Navy . . . ordinary ratings . . . has been before you. The other day, in the Portsmouth-London express, eight jolly tars, when they saw a bright young thing begin to cosmeticise, with one accord took combs from their pockets and behaved like mermaids !

Dined with Harold Dearden at his flat, the other guests being Jock and a Flight-Commander Leslie, a most amusing cove. Dinner very good and talk better, the best thing of the evening being Dearden's: " The thing which impresses me most about a real murder trial, and which distinguishes it from a stage-trial, is the extraordinary kindness, courtesy and consideration with which the murderer is shepherded from the dock to the gallows." He then showed us one of those things to hold wine bottles, called, I believe, coasters, which Crippen had ordered but never paid for. The vain little man had had a silver plate fixed to the bottom with the name " H. H. Crippen," and there it was.

Dec. 5 *Thursday.* Jock said: " Hurry up back from lunch." So I took less than an hour, getting back at half-past three, whereas his lairdship did not stroll in till nearly five. I find this unco' annoying, and the fact that it often happens does not lessen the annoyance. It is true that some fortnight hence he will grudgingly confess to having visited

the Museum, ransacked Hatchard's, and pillaged Bumpus's for some much-wanted authority or rare quotation. But whenever it happens I always get into what servants call a " state." To-day the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra and Pouishnoff beguiled the time with a moderate performance of Brahms's B Flat Piano Concerto. But it might have been last Tuesday's talk entitled: " The Bata Shoe Factory at Zlin in Czecho-Slovakia."

When, at last, Jock arrived I was so furious that I wrote the best article I have ever written on *Macbeth* and very nearly the best on any other play. Emulation between us is now running high, and I find myself saying with Cassius: " I said, an elder critic, not a better."

Ten thousand Germans came over to-day to see the International Football Match. I would have had 'em all marched to Trafalgar Square and forced to listen to that extract from Langhoff's book, blared through loud speakers.

Dec. 6 *Friday.* Yesterday I had an article in the *D.E.* about how to bring up a daughter. I said the first things to teach her were how to make a bed, bake a pie, sew, shop wisely and go down on her knees to scrub. The article has provoked a very human letter, though I think the writer does not quite get my point:

SIR,

I doubt if you will publish my letter, but here goes. I am utterly surprised you publishing such trash as James Agate writes, not only writes but gets paid for, does he realise there are *women* about besides those paltry candlesticks he sits and watches of his own class, does he know the meaning of scrubbing, I doubt it, I have scrubbed untill my back has ached and my knees have been so sore I have had to sit sideways at my work of scrubbing and then I have not complained, I wonder if he has, cos a gentleman scrubbing nothing so common I suppose, then again he suggests hitting a boy across the head, has he realised the damage he could do, my father has had two serious operations for mastoid caused through cuffs of the head and my mother is almost stone deaf through the same treatment while they

were children and being drove, no you are utterly wrong Js Agate, I have three children my eldest a girl then a boy then another girl, a baby, I do not hit them I just talk to them and ask them to do anything and if they don't do what I ask then their saturday penny is stopped, I find this a much better method than knocking them about and if business call's me from home for a day although they are only 10 and 7 yrs old I can trust them to take care of the home and baby, for which I reward them with a small present, and although I say it about my own, money can lay about and will never be touched by them, in fact I manage them far better than their dad with his socalled manly manner, kind words never die Js Agate. So Js Agate do not brand people before you know, don't go by an odd one or two you come across just find out properly and dont go bragging what you would do just because you apparently come from a domeneary family who are passinatly fond of cuffing about, just have a little respect for us women folk if you do owe one a grudge keep it to yourself and understand it's us working class who scrub and keep yourself and others of your class clean, not the frilly twittering bits that flutter around you and give you an inspireation for another bit of insult and so swell your purse, we poorer class do not get this fine chance of thinking " I'll write on so and so his kid wants a different upbringing than that and it will add to my purse for the club to-night," no we are not all James Agate's so in the waste paper basket our poor writing and thinking of many hours goes and forgotten. Take my advice Js Agate and asosiate with the working class a little more and put your own miserable self in a cupboard and lock it up and find a much broarder self and take it out away from clubs and finery and Hotels and all that causes misery and come among us working class who live from week to week and have to pay no matter how big the price and drain on their pocket when they need a nessesary article, be one of us and see our views as well as your own and stick it a month or two, then write an article with sence wich I think you will be able to and forget insults then the *Daily Express* will need no recomending.

A WOMAN READER.

Lunched at the Savage with James Heddle, my first editor on *The Manchester Daily Dispatch* and managing editor of the

Hulton group of papers for twenty years. Full, as usual, of stories about T. W. H. Crosland, that gaunt wolf of journalism and talented poet, who is now so utterly forgotten. Yet this, I think, should be remembered. It is the epitaph he composed for himself:

Epitaph

If men should say aught of me
After I die:
Say there were many things he might have bought
And did not buy.
Unhonoured by his fellows he grew old,
And trod the path to Hell.
But there were many things he might have sold,
And did not sell.

Crosland lived in a flat built like a railway carriage, and the view from the three rooms was the same—a railway line and a primitive urinal. He threw money away, and if a waiter interrupted a story to bring change would send tray and money flying. (It was generally somebody else's money.) Crosland had an appearance rather like Dr. Johnson's, but there the likeness ended. "I had the melancholy pleasure of paying for his funeral," Jimmie said. He also told this good story of Hulton, good because it describes the man. Jimmie, who had been nursing "X," now a very famous journalist, promoted him to the dignity of initials, i.e. he was told that henceforth he would be allowed to put his initials beneath his articles. The day the first signed article appeared Hulton's bell rang and Jimmie waited on his chief.

HULTON (*quizzically*). Who's the young feller as signed that stuff on Page Three this morning?

HEDDLE (*brightly*). That's young "X." We think quite a lot of him in the office.

HULTON (*slowly and impressively*). Get without 'im!

Dec. 7 Saturday. The *S.T.* is incorrigible! I really believe they would print: "40 years long was I grieved with this generation, and said . . ." In my proof to-day they tried this on me:

When Shakespeare, or somebody acting for him, wrote:

" The Ghost of Banquo enters and sits in Macbeth's place," he presumably meant it, unless we are to hold that whoever put the play together did not know the meaning of 10 of the simplest words in the language. Did Shakespeare mean these 10 low words which creep in one dull line ?

I verily believe they would see nothing wrong in printing " The 10 Commandments."

Good example to-day of the capriciousness of fame. Unable to get to my bank owing to the fog called at a small branch in Belsize Park and asked them to cash a cheque. Question of identity arising the local manager said he was a regular reader of the *S.T.* but had never read any of my stuff. His tone of voice implied that dramatic criticism was on the intellectual level of scavenging. Contrariwise on Friday I was buying some tobacco at a shop where the manager was arguing over the 'phone about a defective radio. I said my trouble was at the transmitting end, whereupon he asked my name. I told him and he said he once bought a gramophone record of mine : " I was out of England at the time and I sent home for it." I asked where he had been and he said: " The Falkland Islands ! " I was so flattered that if I had not forsworn cigars I should there and then have ordered a thousand.

Dec. 8 *Sunday.* Printers are the very devil. In to-day's *S.T* I am made to allude to Lady Macbeth as the " field-like queen," and also to her " frienzied " efforts to get her hands clean. Have torn up a letter to the Editor saying I am in a " frienzy " to know what kind of field Lady M. was like. How did I come to miss these mistakes in the proof ? *They weren't there !* Put in by the printer in the course of correcting something else.

Writing is like gunnery. One of the great difficulties is to know whether you are going to fall short of your mark or overshoot it. Are you explaining a thing too much or too little ? Montague says that the good writer will credit his reader with the power to take a thing in. But readers differ, and something which will be as clear as mud to the potman at your public-house will mightily puzzle your Bloomsbury

blue-stocking or Cheltenham relict. For example Fred Leigh told me to-day of a Cockney lad in the next bed to him at the South African War Hospital at Abbeville. When they told him that they had had to amputate both feet the lad said, " Blimey, wot will Chelsea do nah ? " Does that story tell itself, or doesn't it ? Here is an overheard snatch of dialogue which, possibly, pulls its own weight:

A. I met C. in Paris last week.
B. Where ?
A. In one of his unusual haunts.

Dec. 9 *Monday.* Lunched at the Ivy with John Rayner, feature editor of *D.E.* Overheard as we passed one high-brow table: " My dear, she's the best young actress I know. Of course she's never done anything ! " J. R. very amusing. Advanced as a scientific fact the statement that people with short legs live longer than the other sort. Also said about the business of publishing: " It's just about gentlemanly enough to put one's second son into." Charles Laughton was there with Elsa, who was wearing a straw hat with an elastic and looking a young thirteen.

Dec. 10 *Tuesday.* At half-past one this morning turned on the wireless and heard a delightful performance of *Tyl Eulenspiegel* from some German station. Had to be very soft because of the people above, in fact pianissimo all the way through, but it was a delightful and at that hour secret communion with a great race despite the Nazis, blast 'em. Fred Leigh was entranced too. We often have a quiet hour like this with a couple of pipes and not a word spoken.

Dec. 11 *Wednesday.* Lunched with R. H. Gretton, who said he preferred wireless drama to film and film to theatre. " You can see Othello as soon as you don't have to look at him." And : " The screen can't be as artificial as that little far-away lighted box." He described C. P. Scott as a Bashibazouk pacifist violent enough to fight anybody for any right principle.

Dec. 12 *Thursday.* Shocking cold, bed and *Pickwick Papers*, getting up to see *Mary Tudor*, my brother-in-law's piece at the Playhouse, which I sat through in greatcoat and muffler. Not bad at all.

Dec. 13 *Friday.* More cold, bed and *Pickwick*. "Mr. Grummer's fourth [act was] to produce from the breast-pocket of his coat a short truncheon, surmounted by a brazen crown, with which he beckoned to Mr. Pickwick with a grave and ghost-like air." Surely Dickens had a fleeting vision here of the Ghost of Hamlet's father?

Got up to take the chair for a debate between St. John Ervine and Cedric Hardwicke at Sir Philip Sassoon's gorgeous house —I suppose there are some living-rooms, though I didn't see any. Subject: Should Actors Waste their Time on the Films? Should have been: Should Film Stars Waste their Time on the Stage? Dined at home, and made final corrections in a story George Mathew and I have written together. Story called "Two Minutes to Twelve." Real title: "The Ides of March," but understand from Peters that the magazine public has never heard of any such thing.

Dec. 14 *Saturday.* A wakeful night during which I read most of Froude's *History of Mary Tudor*, the result being that I spent the morning in bed re-writing my notice of Wilfrid Grantham's play. Was reminded of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* which at home was unguardedly kept in an open book-case next to Byron's *Bride of Abydos* and, shade of Charles Lamb! Zimmerman on Solitude. How well I remember creeping into that morning-room to steal as much time as I dared with that terrifying yet compelling, *squat* little volume in the green binding with illustrations, and how if caught I was always ready to put Foxe back in his place quickly and substitute a volume of Miss Edgeworth's *Frank*!

First of the Christmas pantomimes this afternoon. Vaudeville show of *Sleeping Beauty*. Revue-ish, but redeemed by Nellie Wallace. What a trouper! Jock and I nearly rolled off our seats at her modiste in black velvet—a Schiaparelli giving

birth to creations in coconut matting, sack-cloth and linoleum. Patrick Waddington as the Principal Boy gets himself up exactly like Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon*.

Dec. 15 *Sunday.* Ion Swinley told me at lunch to-day that they had *two* dress-rehearsals of *Macbeth*. They started the first rehearsal at eleven o'clock on Monday and finished at seven. Began again at eight o'clock and went through the whole piece again. Tuesday was the first night and on Wednesday there were two performances, afternoon and evening. On Thursday he started rehearsing *The School for Scandal* as well as playing *Macbeth* at night.

Dined with Martita Hunt at the Wine and Food Society's claret blow-out. All very lovely and choice except that owing to my cold everything that was soft tasted of linseed poultice and everything hard like the buttons off mattresses. At our table were A. J. A. Symons, author of *The Life of Baron Corvo*, a lady who smoked a big cigar most convincingly, Madeleine Carroll with her husband, and a very highbrow woman who based a loathing for Falstaff on the ground that she was sensual " in the Greek rather than the Elizabethan manner." The talk then veered to the subject of Boswell and somebody asked a little lady who up to then had not spoken what she thought of Dr. Johnson. " I think he's a crashing bore ! " she said. To cover the awkward pause somebody said, " But if you don't read, Madam—and after all writing is only one of the arts—perhaps you sing or paint ? " The little lady said: " I have just bicycled across Europe. I don't scribble or chatter about life. I just live ! " Martita in great form all evening: " Whenever you refuse to say that a young player is a Bernhardt the profession realises it's just your kink ! "

Dec. 17 *Tuesday.* Am having a go at Ivor Brown for some nonsense about Stephen Phillips in his *Manchester Guardian* article last week:

> " It must have been very easy to write in the ' Marpessa ' manner. If a youth of any verbal profusion and talent for pastiche had soaked himself in Tennyson, dined

in Soho with a bottle of the more vehement Chianti, and then let drive he could hardly help hitting the target."

Sent Ivor the following:

16*th December*, 1935.

DEAR IVOR,

The Observer bears witness to your talent for " verbal profusion," and *Master Sanguine* admirably proves your talent for pastiche. You are also, like all our generation, soaked in Tennyson. You are therefore peculiarly qualified to make good your own contemptible (Pickwickian sense !) statement.

I here and now challenge you to produce a page of verse as good as Page 13 in my " Marpessa." In case your edition is different, it begins at: " What is the love of men that women seek it ? " (which is at the bottom of the previous page) and ends at : " And the low grave doth make thee exquisite."

If you can do this—and I suggest that we let Jock, who loves us both, judge !—I shall be happy to offer you and Irene the best possible dinner outside Soho and the beadiest bubbles winking at the brim.

Ever,

J. A.

Here is the page referred to:

What is the love of men that women seek it ?
In its beginning pale with cruelty,
But having sipped of beauty, negligent,
And full of languor and distaste: for they
Seeking that perfect face beyond the world
Approach in vision earthly semblances,
And touch, and at the shadows flee away.
Then wilt thou die ? Part with eternal thoughts,
Lie without any hope beneath the grass,
All thy imaginations in the dust ?
And all that tint and melody and breath,
Which in their lovely unison art thou,
To be dispersed upon the whirling sands !
Thy soul blown seaward on nocturnal blast !
O brief and breathing creature, wilt thou cease
Once having been ? Thy doom doth make thee rich,
And the low grave doth make thee exquisite.

I admit that " on nocturnal blast " is a give-away. Also S. P. does not see that the dead who " lie without any hope beneath the grass " also lie without any despair or fear or

boredom or any of the things with which the King of Terrors tries to spoof us. But I am impatient to see whether Ivor takes up the challenge and curious to know how he succeeds.

A young man—I suppose he must by now be middle-aged—writes to ask if I remember him. He was a corporal in my lot at Codford St. Mary, on the Plain, during the war. Makes the astonishing statement that during an air-raid alarm I went on playing " They Wouldn't Believe Me " on the mess-room piano, the cause of the alarm turning out to be a shepherd-boy's lantern on the top of the bluff under whose lee the camp was. This is improbable on the face of it. What would a raiding plane or airship want with a light ? Also courage was never my line. But there *was* a piano in the mess and that *was* the tune I used to play. I can only imagine I didn't hear of the scare till afterwards !

Dec. 19 *Thursday.* A hurly-burly of a morning in which the following alphabet of events occur even before I get up !

(*a*) Ivor, in the post, accepts my challenge, proposing to dash off thirty lines or so of unmistakable Stephen Phillips " in the dead vast and middle of Christmas afternoon."

(*b*) Henry Ainley, in the post, tells me in a charming letter apropos of *Macbeth* at the Old Vic. that he is not likely to return to the stage for " Æons of Swinleys."

(*c*) Some ass, also in the post, has been cast for a part in *The Cherry Orchard* at Tyrone or Guthrie or somewhere, and will I tell him by return what the character means and what the play is all about, since it didn't make sense when he read it.

(*d*) A paper rings up to say it wants a pantomime article at once, and that it is sending a boy for it.

(*e*) A messenger arrives with an excellent photograph of Teddy Baldock intended for my *Kingdoms for Horses*. Another messenger brings the typescript of that masterpiece which I immediately start to revise.

(*f*) Jock meanwhile forces me to begin the pantomime article.

(*g*) The boy arrives and is asked to wait in the study.

(*h*) H. Steggles, the artist, arrives and has to be asked to wait in my drawing-room. He is to do a painting which is to be the frontispiece for *Kingdoms for Horses*.

(*i*) George Bishop rings up to coax me, wholly without success, to attend a revival of *La Poupée* on Saturday night.

(*j*) Fred planks my breakfast on my bed.

(*k*) Jock brightens up and we finish the pantomime article in a blaze of collaboration. Thus, concerning Nellie Wallace in *The Sleeping Beauty* I dictate the sentence: "Then comes a modiste, clothed in black velvet, who is the epitome and apotheosis of every genius in this line from Worth to Schiaparelli." Jock is good enough to alter this, even while taking it down, to the following: "Then comes a modiste *clothed in black samite, mystic, wonderful,* who is the epitome and apotheosis of every genius in this line from Mantalini to Schiaparelli." Have my revenge for this amendment by dictating: "Mr. Bert Coote, our one remaining tragi-comedian, sings what purports to be and ultimately becomes a chorus-song for children entitled, 'Don't Tease the Bees, Please!' and his delivery of the first verse is wet with the shimmering of wings and eyelids!"

J. A. How many words have I done now, and what time is it?

Jock. Eight hundred and it's one o'clock.

J. A. Look here, Jock, be a darling and . . .

Jock (*suddenly wildly Scotch*). 'A ken what's comin'. Be a darlin' and feenish the bluidy thing! All right then, since it's nearin' Christmas. Get up and get yer face washed and attend to yer visitor!

Still later, Jock's face comes round the bathroom door:

Jock. I suppose you've no objection to a comparison between your friend Bert Coote and my friend Aristophanes.

J. A. (*a little stiffly and nose full of soap*). I fail to see any connection!

Jock (*in scornful triumph*). "The Wasps," ye haverin' gumph!

Dec. 21 *Saturday.* Received this letter from a charming, eccentric and anonymous correspondent who for the past three years has written me on an average of once every three weeks:

Dec. 16–1935.

MISTER AYE-GATE, SIR,

For whom, prithee, trailed you your coat?

By the bye, according to the Book of the profits, you appear to have No Home—Argal, dear Sir, you have no recess—fitted or otherwise—for books, (make that a semi colon if you admire semi colons), no telephone to say you are not the laundry to even once a day, no front door therefore no latchkey and no dress trousers. All tarrydiddles. Here, nevertheless, is a Christmas card.

You WERE trailing your coat! There is battle in your eye—in your whole phisog indeed—when you sit at a play (every feature bristles) so you make it articulate when we don't see you?

What a country yours is. Black streets, black houses, black sky. It may put the flavour in the beef and the perfume in the violets but who if he cd choose would choose beef and violets. What must St. Andrews be like this weather?

Yors trooly ——

P.S. 'Appy Christmas.

Enclosed were three delicious photographs of Sarah Bernhardt, one of them dated July 1881, and three of Ellen Terry, one being of Ophelia and faded almost to nothing.

Dec. 22 *Sunday.* In to-day's article, alleged to be about *Fritzi*, a musical play, I appear to have out-Walkleyed Walkley. In his essay on Grock A. B. W. cited Croce, Dieterich, Fiorillo, Shakespeare, Hugo, Machiavelli, FitzGerald, James Spedding, Peacock, Jean Paul Richter, Aristotle, and, of course, Sainte-Beuve. A beggarly dozen, even if they show an austerity that is frightening. My list is more liberal: The old lady in *David Copperfield* who objected to meandering, Legouvé, Scribe, La Fontaine, Auber, Maurice Baring, Heine, Halévy, Crémieux, Meilhac, Népomucène Lemercier, Talleyrand, Corneille, Racine, Dante, Sophocles,

Photo : Downey

Sarah Bernhardt in 1881

Shakespeare, Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Byron, Buonaparte, Milton, Ben Jonson, Gilbert and Sullivan.

In the afternoon called on A. E. Wilson of *The Star*, very ill with rheumatic fever and not able to move hand or foot. Found him in wonderful spirits considering. Told me that the wireless inflicted " Onaway, Awake, Beloved ! " on him eight times last week with the result that he no longer dares to turn it on. A very staunch, good fellow, as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, and much the same shape. Has a continual flow of unexpected wit, which remains unexpected in spite of the fact that it is always forthcoming.

Dec. 23 *Monday.* Broadcast to-night on Sarah Bernhardt in the " I Knew a Man " series. At the end let them hear Sarah's voice in a record from *Phèdre*. Nobody seemed to think anything of it.

Dec. 24 *Tuesday.* An exchange of letters:

Matlock,
Derbyshire.
December 12*th*, 1935.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

This afternoon with quite a thrill I came on my own name preening itself among the gay and distinguished company of your admirable *Ego*.

I feel that its presence there almost entitles me to address you in the familiar style of an old acquaintance. But I am not quite sure: for you are a bit harsh in your epithets ! " Operative " word indeed—p. 244—any word was good enough for me when I wrote those letters ! To squat on a K'ang in a mud hovel, a dirty scrap of paper on one's knee and an inch of stubbly pencil to write with; a rabble of gaping ruffians peering over one's shoulder and jostling one's elbow—this is not I assure you the atmosphere for leisurely composition or a nice choice of words, even though the Bandit Chief be kind enough to prompt one with a prod from his automatic in the ribs. The first word that comes will serve !

All the same, thank you for giving my adventures such a setting.

Yours sincerely,
TINKO PAWLEY.

16th December, 1935.

DEAR MRS. TINKO PAWLEY,

How very nice of you to write!

I hope you will get a similar thrill when you find your present letter in my next book. But there is one thing I want you to tell me, as it may "interest our women readers."

In the famous letter you asked for a lipstick, and it was this, you will remember, which provoked my comment. I can understand a man in similar circumstances asking for shaving-soap, because to go unshaved is very uncomfortable. But I do not think a man would write for brilliantine to make his hair glossy.

Why did you write for a lipstick? I have lots of theories. Was it to fascinate your companion? Or to amaze the brigands? Or does a woman really feel uncomfortable without these messes?

A still nobler theory which on your behalf I voiced as loudly and frequently as possible is that you asked for the lipstick to prove to your friends that your morale was unimpaired. Will you tell me which is the right theory, because this is the kind of thing no man understands, and in which all male authors go wrong?

Yours sincerely,
JAMES AGATE.

Matlock,
Derbyshire.
December 17th, 1935.

DEAR MR. AGATE,

Thank you for your delightful letter. I feel most important, having my prison past and feminine frivolities so keenly queried!

Great is lipstick! I'd no idea that so simple a request would make such a fuss. And of course I never imagined that my scrawl would ever get beyond my family—if it reached even them. So I was dumbfounded when after my release letters came to me from all over the world, some praising me for what they called my "courage," most arraigning me for my "wicked levity in the face of death," a few bluntly declaring the lipstick incident a fake—"No woman in such circumstances would so write."

In this conflict of opinions, I quite forgot what really

were the motives for which I wrote—if indeed I ever had a conscious motive.

When we heard we might write home, lipstick just seemed a natural thing to ask for. It was part of my ordinary daily toilette, a bit of the sane normal life I had lost. We were dirty, and had no soap or even warm water; with powder and lipstick a woman can capture the semblance of cleanliness, and cheat herself into thinking she is looking her best. In such circumstances brilliantine on a man would be affectation; make-up is woman's tribute to her own self-respect! Unkempt and bedraggled I felt depressed and helpless; a touch of make-up, and I was ready to face anything—even bandits. I did not exactly want to fascinate them; but secretly and illogically I valued their opinions. They had criticised my red-sun-blistered face and hideous yellow mop of hair—all right, I'd shew them!

And then of course I knew that no respectable Chinese woman is properly dressed without rouge; only illness or misfortune could make her appear in public without it. When kidnapped, Chinese girls go to pieces and show their distress by wan cheeks and colourless lips. So the bandits, who were deeply interested spectators at my daily titivatings, knew each time I touched my lips that I was not breaking down—which was for many reasons most important. "This little foreign bitch," they were good enough to say, "is not like our women—she has guts! Even with us she observes the proprieties."

Perhaps I did think of the effect on my own people—I hope I did. Anyhow my queer demand did buck my mother up: "If she wants lipstick, she's all right." And that, after all, is the only part of the episode that really matters.

Yours sincerely,

TINKO PAWLEY.

And here is one from brother Edward:

December 24th, 1935.

DEAR JIM,

Here is my Christmas present. It is all I can afford:

1. "There was a criminal in Italy, who was suffered to make his choice between Guicciardini's *History* and the galleys. He chose the history. But the War of Pisa was too much for him. He changed his mind, and went to the oar." (Macaulay)

2. " In Virgil's *Georgics*, what pleasant variety there is! Who, delighting in horses, shall not be thereto more enflamed, reading of the breeding, choosing and keeping of them? Virgil leaveth far behind him all breeders, hackney-men and dealers." (Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governour*.)

3. " Verily, nine-pins and quoiting should be utterly rejected of all noble men. In like wise foot-ball, wherein is nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence, wherefore it is to be put in perpetual silence. But the most honorable exercise is to ride surely and clean on a great horse and a rough." (Ibid.)

4. " I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew so well." (Thoreau's *Walden*.)

E. A.

P.S. *It is more than I can afford!*

And, last, this screed from May, I having made the point in the *S.T.* that the only thing which interests me about Bloody Mary is her bloodiness or non-bloodiness, and that her husband's play entirely burkes the issue by not mentioning the fires at Smithfield:

Clapham.
24th December, 1935.

MY DEAR JIMKINS,

I should not be an Agate if I were not argumentative about *Mary Tudor*. I can discuss it since I had no hand in the writing. Incidentally I can imagine nothing worse than being a critic's sister and playwright's wife except being that critic!

Let me quote Dr. Johnson, who said: " All history in so far as it is not supported by contemporary evidence is romance," before stating that Wilfrid's play was based on *Public Records*, *Despatches of Ambassadors*, *Original Private Letters* and *Other Contemporary Documents* as collected by J. M. Stone.

Here follows a reasoned defence of devastating length—war of attrition was always May's strong point. After stating that burning for heresy was the recognised punishment of the age she continues as follows:

Photo: Gray

May Agate as Mistress Strelley in "Mary Tudor"

Referring to Mary's reign Tout says, "Outside the Home Counties there were few Protestants to burn"—the bulk of the population of England was solidly Roman Catholic. Again hear your friend Dr. Johnson:

MAYO. I am of the opinion, Sir, that every man is entitled to liberty of conscience in religion; and that the magistrate cannot restrain that right.

DR. JOHNSON. Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to liberty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with liberty of talking; nay, with liberty of preaching. Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases; for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not a moral right, for he ought to inform himself and think justly. But, Sir, no member of society has a right to teach any doctrine contrary to what the society holds to be true.

GOLDSMITH. . . . Our first reformers, who were burnt for not believing bread and wine to be Christ . . .

DR. JOHNSON (*interrupting him*). Sir, they were not burnt for not believing bread and wine to be Christ, but for insulting those who did believe it.—Vol. III, p. 291.

No, the " bloody " epithet won't do, and I contend it would be out of proportion in a play, to lay greater stress on the heresy theme than the actual amount it was stressed at the time. A play is not a vindication, or a final historical verdict. One must not confuse the standpoint of an historian with that of a playwright whose job it is to find some conflict worth recording—to provide some total gesture to his character—to resolve the chord.

A parallel could well be drawn with, say, a play about you in 400 years' time, when meat-eating will be about as unheard of as burning for heresy is now. You eat 3 meat meals a day—should you therefore be shown only defending or gloating over your pork chop? The very fact that in *M.T.* the burnings are referred to casually gives a truer, and more sinister, picture of the times than any tract could do.

Wilfrid remains silent and aloof from my screed! Je me le permets, being your loving but pernickety sister

THE MAYKINSDOODLE.

Have decided to leave May in possession of the field. With Wilfrid in reserve, not to mention Edward, I am no match for the Clapham hornets.

The usual dramatic critic's Christmas Eve. Four hours of the Lyceum Pantomime followed by four at the Lane, with no time for food in between owing to the necessity of dressing.

Christmas Day. Lunched at Monty's, visited squalling god-child, and looked in at Tim Dawes's flat where we talked books for a couple of hours and he showed me a remarkable first edition of de Sade—I believe the world's best copy. In the evening sat, Scrooge-like, at the Café Royal, friendless and deserted. Finally encountered another lone soul whom I hadn't seen for years and gave him dinner.

Boxing Day. Pub-crawled.

Dec. 27 Friday. Thank Heaven work has started again. Is the world crackers, or am I? Do other people run up against the same filthy incompetence that I do? Only last week one of the big stores sent a man to measure the top of my piano for a green baize cover. It arrived and didn't fit by inches. And now this happens. Having ordered some new curtains to match the new wall-paper—I simply couldn't stand that dado any longer and incidentally it ruined the Dunlop—a *very* West End firm sent a man to measure the window for a wooden pelmet-case. Three days later a monstrous thing arrived which entirely cluttered up my hall. To-day they come to put it up. *It doesn't fit*, and has to be taken away! But they can't move it till next week, so my hall remains cluttered up. While I am cursing, a telegram arrives in a gold envelope conveying the Christmas greetings of Timothy Snooks. As it is insufficiently addressed will I pay 2/6? I damn well won't and in my temper tell them to send it back or do anything they like with it.

Dec. 28 *Saturday.* Ivor's reply to my challenge:

Lines Written After a Visit to New Drury.

So Binnie, radiant, soared amid the beans,
Nor recked the maid what vegetable else,
The suave banana or the vagrom pea,
Might throw its bosky barricadoes up
Striving with branch and tuber to oppose
Her way; but all incurious she clomb,
Her purpose steeled for Annabel, her love.
Onward she thrust, with keen prehensive hand
And foot in bold alliance to surmount
The leafy ladder, which of magic grew
And magically melted in the dome
Of stratospheric desolation.
Here none save giants dwell, paedophagous,
Enorm, who lick their sanguine chops in thought
Of carrion babes upon the gridiron strewn,
With tender terrene rumps, whose grillèd flesh
Alone distils aroma to this bleak,
This hell supernal, viewless vacancy,
Which echoes not nor answers; here abide
The silences unbreakable which break
All human hearts, the chill, insensate Void
Where none may live but monsters, things of blood
So curdled and so gelid that in them
There is not life but lethargy, till once
The savour of a human gobbet stirs
The crimson jet i' the vein and lust of food
And sparks them vitally.
Yet Binnie strove
And with resistless blade hewed branchy gaps
And penetrable breach until she came
Into the caves of giantry, where lay,
Encellared, the fair princess, like to die.
Then spake the maiden to the antres vast,
" What if I fail the Monster to o'erthrow
And tossed, poor fragment of mortality,
Like meteor disjected from a star,
Go streaming down the pathways of the sky
Where late I won the upward passages,
Triumphing ? To the elements we owe
Our elemental being and the debt
Of air to air restóring glad I pay.
Dust is our matter, but the soul is air,
Pure air and moteless, such as Helicon
Laps to the lungs of Muses and the Seven
Entrancèd breathe and vow the draught divine,
Air such as fans Olympus, murmurous air
Cool as a maiden's fingers on the brow

Of purple-dark Parnassus when the grape
Is passionate for plucking, air that thrills
To play on Tempe's rivulets and pass
Cascading into coronals of foam.
Such air am I. And shall I craven shrink
To launch this bubble Me upon the winds,
My home and haven? For all corporal dust
Is scattered to the composture of clay
Whence came these limbs; but not this larger I,
This leaping flame, this torch, this liberty,
For that is of the air. Now Annabel,
I come." So spake the maiden and sped on,
Sword in her hand, brave music on her lips,
To travail in gigantic war o' the clouds,
Daughter of Earth and all its chivalry,
Daughter of Earth and all its loveliness,
Alone, unparagoned.

IVOR BROWN.

We now await the verdict of Jock who is in Scotland. My challenge was for a page "as good as" Phillips and in my opinion Ivor loses through being too good. Also too witty. The one line which is perfect is

"Cascading into coronals of foam."

But I miss S. P.'s firm grasp of the obvious.

Dec. 29 *Sunday.* As George Mathew and I were getting out of the car at the Café Royal to-day we met a jovial fellow called Vincent Lambourne and those not less convivial spirits George Graves and Shaun Glenville. Presently found ourselves lunching with them. Shaun told a good story of an Irish theatre-manager who, asked by the touring manager what the week's prospects were, replied: "Well now, some nights the theayter will be half-full, and begorra there's other nights when the bloody place will be half-empty!" Both agreed that the critics are wrong in saying that such and such a comedian hasn't enough scope, should have his part written up for him, and so on. "You can't write a bad part for a good comedian," said Shaun. And George said: "A good comedian makes his own scope." Both were full of a recent visit to Broadmoor. Glenville told how, when Paul England sang "Sonny Boy," the seven hundred patients—

as they call them—were all deeply moved. The tears rolled down the cheeks of one delightful old lady who, he was informed, had cut the throats of four sleeping infants. G. G. had an unbelievable story—I don't think he believed it himself—of one sweet old girl who had been deemed cured and let out on probation as a cook. " She was found peeling potatoes one morning," said George, " with a couple of decapitated scullery-maids, one on each side of her ! "

Dec. 30 End of my valedictory wireless talk to-night : *Monday.*

This is the last talk of the present series and whether they are to be renewed or not is one of the things which lie in the lap of the New Year. It may be that the time is at hand when the screen will finally swallow the theatre, in which case I do not see how film criticism can help swallowing dramatic criticism. Now I have read some film critics, and I gather from them that the screen is producing great actors and actresses at the rate of three a fortnight. Irvings and Bernhardts, it appears, are tumbling over each other, and every morning a new Ellen Terry or Réjane rises with the lark. Now, listeners, I am not going to have any truck with any of this pestiferous nonsense. I may be out of date. Bright young critics are arising who never saw, and cannot even spell the names of the actors and actresses who were great in my day. Whether the era now dawning will want to have any truck with me I neither know nor care. I intend to have no truck with it. All around me young critics, even in the theatre, are being kind to players who, in the days before the film existed, would have been told to get off the boards and go and learn their job. The honest thing, of course, would be to retire, or go and put my head in the gas oven. But while I have plenty of moral courage, which is the easy sort, I have too little of the other and shall continue to write for bread. Yet I cannot hope wholly to escape the blight which is creeping over the age, and I have no doubt that I am on the verge of writing twaddle as contemptible as that of the youngest film critic. For this reason, while there are still some vestiges of sanity about me, I have composed my epitaph. This, then, be the verse you grave for me:

Though
In his declining years
He used the words
Great, First-Class, Pre-Eminent
Indiscriminately
Like everybody else
JAMES AGATE
At his unclouded best
Remembering what great acting was
Allowed no second-rate player
To get past him.

Dec. 31 *Tuesday.* Here are two views of Ireland and the Irish. The first is the Dedication to *The Impossible Irish* by one Tom Penhaligon :

This book is flung in the face of the Irish—a fighting race who never won a battle, a race of politicians who cannot govern themselves, a race of writers without a great one of native strain, an island race who have yet to man a fleet for war, for commerce or for the fishing banks and to learn how to build ships, a pious race excelling in blasphemy, who feel most wronged by those they have first injured, who sing of love and practise fratricide, preach freedom and enact suppression, a race of democrats who sweat the poor, have a harp for an emblem and no musicians, revelled on foreign gold and cringed without it, whose earlier history is myth and murder, whose later, murder, whose tongue is silver and whose heart is black, a race skilled in idleness, talented in hate, inventive only in slander, whose land is a breeding-ground of modern reaction and the cradle of western crime.

Then this, by one Louis MacNeice, a Belfast poet and St. John Ervine's fellow-townsman :

Therefore I resign, good-bye the chequered and the quiet hills,
The gaudily-striped Atlantic, the linen-mills
That swallow the shawled file, the black moor where half
A turf-stack stands like a ruined cenotaph;
Good-bye your hens running in and out of the white house,
Your absent-minded goats along the road, your black cows,
Your greyhounds and your hunters beautifully bred,
Your drums and your dolled-up virgins and your ignorant dead.

Grand invective, and real poetry !

My work this year:

Sunday Times . .	100,000 words
The Tatler . . .	60,000 „
Pseudonym No. 1 . .	60,000 „
Pseudonym No. 2 . .	85,000 „
Daily Express : . .	80,000 „
B.B.C. . . .	50,000 „
Ego	100,000 „
Odd articles . . .	20,000 „
	555,000

Compare Arnold Bennett in 1908. "I have never worked so hard as this year . . . total words 423,500." If I include *Kingdoms for Horses* (45,000 words) I can bring the grand total up to 600,000 words. But this would be cheating as it is only old stuff worked up. In addition have visited between 100 and 150 plays, 50 films, glanced at 500 books and more or less read 200. As these average 100,000 words each my eye this year must have taken in twenty million words. I am half-inclined to disbelieve these astronomical figures, and will base my claim to an industrious year on the amount I have *written*. Here the calculation is precise. I have churned out, and Jock has taken down, 455,000 words, while, *with my own hand and in my spare time*, I have written 100,000 words of Diary.

1936

Jan. 1 *Wednesday.* The year begins grandly. While it is true that on the subject of Sarah "I am sworn to an Iago-like silence,"[1] the embargo does not apply to anybody else. The first letter I opened this morning was from Gwen John and written in French: "J'ai vu Sarah dans *La Dame aux Camélias* à Swansea au commencement du siècle. Je me souviens d'une taille svelte et gracieuse. Sarah était habillée en jaune et portait naturellement un camélia. Elle tournait le dos à la salle, ce qui était dans ces jours-là contre le règle du théâtre. Quand elle 'mourait mieux que n'importe quelle actrice vivante' une jeune fille qui était avec moi ne pouvait pas le supporter, ayant récemment perdu une soeur morte de la phtisie."

I half-suspect Miss John of using the word "naturellement" to mean "of course." But if she is alluding to the simplicity with which Sarah could wear flowers it only confirms May's statement that "le naturel" was the phrase oftenest on Sarah's lips. Actually I never saw Sarah wear any camellias in this play, and no photograph shows her wearing them. But I well remember how she played the whole of that first love-scene with Armand standing by the sofa, toying with a flower and turning her back to the audience, or very nearly.

While I was setting this down, the afternoon post brought in a letter from the unknown correspondent who always addresses me as "Mister Aye-gate, SIR." From this I must be allowed to quote a passage, to have written which I would give both ears—not much of a sacrifice now that there is no golden voice to listen to:

> Sarah's voice was a music of some kind, how perhaps

[1] See *Ego*, p. 156.

> Beethoven heard music in his mind, before it had to be cooled down and delivered by wood and metal. It was like a storm of thrushes, and how the wind sobs in one's ear when it is high. It was full of the light Cézanne can put on an apple, and the fire there is in Van Gogh. As sweet as doves, as majestical as the sky——

Over and over again I have pointed out how the best things about great actors are always said or written by non-professional critics.

What about this passage in *The Times Review of the Year* published to-day:

> It remains true that English acting is greatly in advance of our dramatic writing. This makes it the more regrettable that so many managers should have seen fit, rather than promote to leading parts actors and actresses with knowledge of our language and wide experience of our stage, to rely upon the charms, if any, of broken English. Where imported European stars have succeeded, they have generally done so in parts designed for theatrical display within their personal and linguistic limitations—a circumstance which suggests that their coming is as unhealthy to English playwriting as it is certainly discouraging to English players. This does not apply, in the same degree, to Americans whose speech is closely related to ours, and who, at any rate, perform in their *own* language; they can give an audience the best that is in them; but European actresses, who come to our theatre still babbling in Berlitz, have evidently to depend more upon publicity and good will than upon their own art. The briefest survey of the year proves that, in acting, the English stage is extremely rich.

Then follows a review of the leading English performances of the year, and the article concludes:

> Nor is it necessary to look only to leading parts. Wherever English acting is genuinely professional it is good. The lisping foreign waifs and strays and the revealed *ingénues* who so monotonously acquire fame in a night have been, during the past year, its chief enemies.

Is it possible that the war I started in December 1933 and have never ceased to wage is beginning to bear fruit?

Jan. 2 *Thursday.* A woman writes me about a popular film-star: "As for that goitre-eyed female, Miss P. . . . Q. . . . , she couldn't hold down a job in a stock company at five pounds a week!"

"Goitre-eyed" was the one spot of sunshine in a poor day. Enraged by a book on Willy Clarkson: "Dame Ellen Terry was one of the four Terrys, the others being Marion, Fred, and Edward." This is nonsense. There were not four Terrys but seven, and Edward was not one of them. The seven were Charles, George, Fred, Kate, Ellen, Marion, and Florence. Irving's pet dog was called Fussy, not Flossie. The actor in Tree's production of *Twelfth Night* was not "Norman Forbes-Robertson" but Norman Forbes. Mrs. Patrick Campbell first played Mélisande in Maeterlinck's play not with Norman Forbes, as the index suggests, but with Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Martin Harvey. Sarah Bernhardt did not "produce" *La Dame aux Camélias*. Dumas's piece was first acted on the stage of the Vaudeville in Paris on February 2nd, 1852, with Mme Doche in the principal part, Sarah being six years old at the time. "Edmund Keane," "Orphée dans l'Enfer," and "Phedré" make up the list of errors discovered during a twenty minutes' dip.

In the "Foundations of Music" to-night Egon Petri played three of Liszt's Paganini studies and also his, Liszt's, transcription of the Waltz in Gounod's *Faust*. Half-an-hour of pure rubbish—a waste of Liszt's talent for composing, Petri's for playing, and mine for listening.

Jan. 3 *Friday.* The people who bore me with letters have started the year well. The pest has twelve varieties:

(1) It sends samples of its dramatic criticism, and will I (*a*) appoint it as my deputy, or (*b*) find it a job on some other paper.

(2) It has a lot of old theatre-programmes, and will I buy them? As often as not, these are forwarded and turn out to concern nothing earlier than Herbert Tree's Shakespearean productions.

(3) It submits a novel already rejected by forty publishers, and will I read it and say why?

(4) It owns a complete edition, all but one volume, of an Illustrated Shakespeare printed in the 'forties, and will I say what this is worth?

(5) As it inhabits Widnes or Wednesbury it doesn't get much chance of going to the theatre, and will I say what it ought to visit in London next Easter when it is coming up?

(6) It is a lady who says that her brother was at school with me, and will I therefore help her niece, now an assistant in a book-shop in Leamington, to find a typist's job in Fleet Street, beginning, say as editor's secretary?

(7) It wants to know whether I reviewed a book called, it thinks, *Father India*, and published about eighteen months ago, and what was the proper title and the publisher and the price, and what did I think of it?

(8) It is the president of the Isle of Thanet Thespians, a list of whose productions it encloses, and do I think it foolhardy to attempt *King Lear* next season?

(9) It says it met me at the first night of *Mary Rose*, and will I see it, please, as it has something to say that it can't say in a letter. This is always marked "Urgent and personal."

(10) It is obviously an ardent spinster and it wants to know whether I agree with her that Dame Sybil Thorndike in *Saint Joan* is . . . (some seven pages of closely-written script).

(11) It is a doddering old actor who begins by saying that, having played with Alfred Wigan, it knows I shall be interested in a great number of pages containing nothing of the slightest possible moment.

(12) It writes from Thurso or Thirlmere to tell me what ought to be my views on current successes, and how I ought to express them.

Have devised this formula to be sent to each and all:

"MR. JAMES AGATE REGRETS THAT HE HAS NO TIME TO BOTHER ABOUT THE ENCLOSED IN WHICH HE HAS BEEN GREATLY INTERESTED."

Jan. 4 *Saturday.* In the absence of new plays was at my wits' end to find material for this week's *S.T.* Decided on a run round the circuses, on the principle that the man who cannot get half-a-column out of The Zemganno Sisters is a noodle. The other half was the difficulty. However, Jock came to the rescue by betting me that I couldn't get a quotation for each of the three circuses out of the three best elegies in the language—Gray's, *Lycidas* and *In Memoriam.* This, of course, was a gift in every sense of the word. At the Crystal Palace the sawdust has been replaced by a coconut carpet on which the horses " pursue the noiseless tenor of their way." At Islington an acrobat on the high trapeze " lets our frail thoughts dally with false surmise." Tennyson was more difficult. Fortunately I remembered that George Mathew had done his war training at the Crystal Palace, which gave me the following:

When all was over and we were emerging through the vast and echoing hall, my friend, who during the war years did his naval training under those million panes, stopped for a moment to catch an old echo. Encompassed by his faithful guard, he seemed:

To hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

Jan. 9 *Thursday.* Brother Edward sends me a Dantesque poem. He has more of genius in his little finger than I have of talent in my whole body. His one defect—and I am not sure that it is not a quality—is to glory in the unreadable and unmarketable of this world's books. He is likely, at any moment, to translate the entire works of Landor into German, or Tieck into English :

The Vision

In the midway of this our mortal life,
A vision I beheld, a portent dire
Of what shall be the miserable end
Of zeal mistaken and the waste of time.
An edifice I saw of granite stone
Rising upon an arid desert-plain,

Forbidding, gloomy, dark, an obscure place
All girt around with faceless sentinels.
To this I came, and at the entrance-gate
Knocking, a janitor admitted me.
" Is this," I asked, " the House of Earthly Fools ? "
He answered, " Yea, what species wouldst thou know ?
And why to visit them dost thou desire,
Who seem'st, as yet, scarce ready for our Home ? "
Thus he. Then I, " The looks of mortal men
Are no sure indication of their minds.
Show me the Observation Ward, that harbours those
Who spend their time on Books Unreadable."
He smiled and bowed, and with reluctant step,
Led me through maze of intricate passages—
Which sheltered other lack-wits of the world—
And halted at a door-way strongly barred.
Over the portal's lofty arch I marked,
Written in large plurality of tongues,
The warning of the noted Florentine:
" Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' entrate."
We entered, and within a spacious room
A host of shadow-shapes I then espied,
Engaged in diverse occupations, yet
All of them relative to Literature.
Some sharpened quills, a note-book on the right,
An ink-horn on the left, and ready filled;
Some into Glossaries peered, with spectacles
Nicely adjusted for the furtive chase
Of some expression now grown obsolete.
" Here," my instructor said, " are those lost souls
Who sacrifice their lives to sheepskin; nay,
Neglect the body's needful nourishment,
If upon Vellum they may feed their minds.
Henceforth they are ordained, as I surmise,
To bow their heads into forgotten Tomes,
And count the worms that through the pages bore."
I gazed and mocked them not, for in my heart
Quick sympathy was stirred, as though I knew
Full sure, some day I should consort with them.
I questioned, " Tell me, who is that old man,
In aspect like a walking Manuscript
Of parchment tightly drawn, a human Scroll ? "
" Alas ! " rejoined my guide, " his brain is set
On Jurisprudence and Philosophy—
' The Laws of War and Peace,' by Grotius
(Published at Paris 1625),
Pufendorf, Malebranche, Hobbes' ' Leviathan,'
This is his pabulum; a patient whom
We all consider quite incurable."
I looked around me ere I asked again,
" Who are those other beings in book-form,
Quartos, octavos and in-folios,

Shades, now devoid of mortal flesh and blood,
Slow-stalking Documents towards the grave ? "
My guide made answer, " Some, great readers are
Of comprehensive Histories, not content
With handy Abstracts made by H. G. Wells,
Fluent Abridgments, blithe Compendiums.
They crave for Guicciardini, Karamzin,
Mommsen and Gibbon, Grote, et cetera,
The fruits of twenty years' laborious work,
That lie on dark Museum's dusty shelves,
And none would ever dream of opening !
Others, the rarer fiction do affect,
Say—Péladan, Jean Paul and Espinel,
Scarron, Love Peacock, even Henry James !
But this is a derangement that will pass;
Let them reveal a normal taste for books
By Ohnet, Crawford, Seton Merriman,
And all the masterpieces Bennett wrote—
At once they can regain their liberty."
" Enough ! " I cried. " These creatures do no harm;
Let them enjoy their madness to the full.
Would that all Captains, Traffickers o' the world
Might prove as guiltless ! Lead me forth again ! "
. . . . . .
I stood awhile amid the arid plain,
Musing on all that I had lately seen.
Then, from within the folds of my frayed gown,
I drew the Works of Vico, and began,
In quiet ecstasy, the volume named,
" Principii d'una Scienza Nuova."

E. A.

Jan. 10 *Friday.* Good party last night. Princess Marie-Louise, Mrs. Adams, and Herbert Morgan. First night of Noel's *To-night at 8.30.* H.H. in great form. When, after the play's 1860 funeral, the family drank Madeira she sniffed and said: "Nonsense! We never drank anything except sherry and ham ! " Supper in the Savoy Grill. Couldn't get the table I had ordered at midday because some actors who had begun dinner at seven o'clock were still in possession and refused to budge. Wouldn't have minded, only they were *repertory* actors. Peter Page and Bill (Mrs. Edward Hudson) joined us, and all very jolly. Turtle soup, fillets of sole very plain, a rich mess of chicken, foie gras, asparagus and mushroom sauce, ice with peaches and Bollinger N.V. Half-way through supper called to the telephone to hear from James Bone that Allan Monkhouse is dying.

Allan Monkhouse

Jan. 11 *Saturday.* Monkhouse died in the night. Told Bone I would do something for Monday's *Guardian*. Two columns in to-day's issue written by Montague ten years ago. Shan't enlarge here on the effect this made on me. Jock, who never met either of them, greatly impressed. Scott, Arnold, Montague, Monkhouse, Mair, Johnstone, Langford, Dixon Scott—what a roll-call!

Jan. 18 *Saturday.* Have been more or less in bed all week with bronchial catarrh. It started on Monday going up to Monkhouse's funeral. Travelled with Bone, H. M. Tomlinson and Cochran, who was going on to Manchester. Very good talk and a bright, sunny day with lots of white frost. Somebody remarked how Monkhouse would have enjoyed it. The weather changed completely after Crewe and the combined effect of Stockport, black fog, sleet and the purpose of our journey was most depressing. During the ceremony my chest crackled like machine-guns. I think Allan would have hated the way the clergyman at the crematorium pronounced God "Gard." The psalm was "The Lord is my Shepherd," but in the prosaic version which goes on to say "I shall not lack anything," and the Lesson from Revelation had no particular relation with A.N.M. If I had had to arrange the service I should have wanted something Allan liked, some great passage from Meredith, or a Browning poem. At the end we had the most human bit out of *Gerontius*. But Allan did not care very much for music.

Here is what I wrote in the *M.G.*:

> I rubbed my ears on hearing Mr. Brighouse's broadcast phrase "grand old man." Monkhouse was never old, for if his youth was grave his age was boyish. His last letter to me contained the words "There's sap in't yet!" from the play of Shakespeare's he liked best, or, at any rate, talked about most. In conversation he was always quoting "Call to me all my sad captains!" and at first sight it seems odd that this temperate-minded man should be so fond of "To-night I'll force the wine peep through their scars." Odd that this play of molten brass should be

so close to that Wordsworthian heart. But in Monkhouse the contradiction was only skin deep. His outlook was as little grey as any man's and his mood as little monotone. Passion flamed at the heart of him, though he kept it rarefied and Meredithean. Incidentally *Harry Richmond* was a book he would talk about endlessly.

Though alive to the grandeur that was London and the glory that was Paris, he held Disley to be as brave a hub as any. His sober wishes kept him in the provincial way. He shunned advertisement but did not despise a modest fame. This great man would have been a hero to his valet if he could have tolerated a valet. He was the best friend a man ever had, and no man could have desired a better enemy, since he was justness itself. With the true Liberal genius for making allowances where he had no sympathy, he was Good Samaritan who could be steeled to Grand Inquisitor; a merciful judge, capable of forgiving a criminal everything but his crime. He could say surprising things. "I like goodness," I once heard him declare. "Even the supreme cause has got to behave itself or it doesn't have my vote!"

His mind was an October garden and his very presence had a nip in it. Gossip died in that trenchant air, and in the phrase of Lamb—another favourite—he would stop an exaggeration "like a suspected person in an enemy's country." He set people at ease quicker than anybody I have known, largely through his gift of appearing enormously interested in whatever you had to say. He rolled other people's sentences on his tongue, could be credulous, and then instantly incredulous, and would express appreciation by a quick explosion which was half snort and half bark. Nobody ever came away from a "confab" with Monkhouse without feeling, willy-nilly, that he had been to confession.

Most of the stories I know of him have been told elsewhere, and in any case there is no room to repeat them here. I remember his insisting that I should write the notice of Sarah in *La Dame aux Camélias* on the plea that he did not know French very well and hated the notion of alternately weeping and striking matches. But it is in "A. N. M.'s" literary and dramatic criticisms that one finds best evidence of his fun. He wrote of *Treasure Island* that it "showed how a man of genius may attack the obvious

without discomfiture." At the opening of the Playgoers' Theatre in Manchester in 1907 he wrote: " We felt that if we were saving our country it was quite a delightful way to do it." About Mr. Shaw: " He is a wonderful person who can be everything but human, and even that sometimes. . . . It is some consolation to believe that he must enjoy his own jokes." About Bourchier's Macbeth he said: " Even murder can't be as serious as all that came to ! " And there is one passage about the Irish plays which now seems to apply to Monkhouse himself: " Mr. Meredith says somewhere that there is human nature and Welsh nature, and it seems that there is Irish nature too. The Irish have a genius for melancholy and a genius for fun, and these are reconcilable; we cannot label these actors tragedians or comedians with confidence. Even under the pressure of calamity we may perceive that they are humorous. Their rebellion against fate has no harshness; the joy of life may be good, but there is always that wonderful capacity for lamentation."

This is untrue to Monkhouse in the last few words only. Though his passion for understatement, for purging a subject of its excitement, denied him success as the blatant understand that state, he either could or would not lament. Indeed, he was always digging me in the ribs and asking if I had ever known a writer of his quality meet with such widespread and repeated triumphs.

Well, he is gone, and the music for his going should be of two kinds—the organ for his graver sympathies, and the brave echo of his own laughter. He lived without fuss, and we must not make too much at his dying.

Kipling died early this morning. *Many Inventions* and *Life's Handicap* contain stories as good as anything by Maupassant, whom I have read in his entirety. I do not know enough of the short stories of Tchehov to justify comparison. As a boy I was a great Kipling fan. I remember, in 1898 when he was desperately ill in New York, making a solemn vow that if he died I would wear a black tie for the rest of my life !

One minute before midnight last night the dance music on the wireless was faded out and an announcer came to the microphone to broadcast news of the King's illness. Not the

attack of bronchial catarrh which matters, but "signs of cardiac weakness which must be regarded with some disquiet." Four doctors at Sandringham.

Two lighter moments in a bad week. One was when I mentioned some self-advertising woman and Jock said acidly: "She retired from private life forty years ago!" The other was Noel's *Hands Across the Sea*, a really witty half-hour playlet. They gave me a box so that I could have the corridor to cough in, and I went in my thickest suit, buttoned up to the chin.

Jan. 20 *Monday.* Fred Leigh's boy has got hold of a copy of *The Times* for November 7th, 1805. The paper consists of four small sheets only, and as it was printed in the days when people read with their minds instead of their eyes there are, of course, no pictures. It begins with one sober column of advertisements and then launches straight away into the *London Gazette*. Beneath a heading taking up less than one inch of space, this gives Collingwood's despatches containing the first account of the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson. The account goes on for three columns and then turns the page. The second page is entirely taken up with extracts from the foreign Press, after which there are two dignified leading articles, from the second of which I cull:

> No ebullitions of popular transport, no demonstrations of public joy, marked this great and important event. The honest and manly feeling of the people appeared as it should have done: they felt an inward satisfaction at the triumph of their favourite arms; they mourned with all the sincerity and poignancy of domestic grief, their Hero slain.

Fancy any modern newspaper holding that the honest and manly feelings of a people can be expressed except through the medium of streamers and paper caps, crowds, piano-accordions and Trafalgar Square!

Yet the age was not wholly unalive to expediency. One of the advertisements announces the publication that day of an

engraving of Hoppner's picture of Lord Nelson, while the dramatic critic tells the reader:

> After the Comedy of *She Would and She Would Not*, in which Miss Smith acted Hypolita with admirable spirit, the Proprietors of this Theatre, ever alive to the national glory, produced a hasty but elegant compliment to the memory of Lord Nelson.

Jan. 21 *Tuesday.* Yesterday was a moving day indoors. At 5.30 the wireless announced: "The condition of His Majesty the King shows diminishing strength." At 9.25 came the statement: "The King's life is moving peacefully towards its close." Heard afterwards that the Queen drafted this. At 10 o'clock there was a five-minutes' service beginning with the 23rd Psalm. Then every quarter of an hour the repetition of the last message. One couldn't read or do anything, so George Mathew and I sat and talked. News that the King was dead came through at 12.15.

Jan. 22 *Wednesday.* Every flag was at half-mast yesterday except Buckingham Palace where there was no flag at all, there being no sovereign. The town like a Sunday; all theatres and cinemas closed and all public functions abandoned. Dined quietly at the Langham with Moray McLaren and Rose-Troup, and at 9.30 went across to Broadcasting House to hear the Prime Minister. Very good and well-delivered. Moray said the speech was for all Europe as well as England—"Hitler and the boys will be listening." When Baldwin spoke of the Prince of Wales and his tremendous responsibilities there came into his voice, or I thought so, just a hint of the Lord Chief Justice of *Henry IV*, Part 2, Act V, Sc. 2.

Jan. 24 *Friday.* Rebecca West writes to invite me to lunch and adds: "Darling, have you seen this?"

This is *The Evening Standard's* answer to its own competition of Saturday last: "Name five famous clowns or jugglers." Answers adjudged correct are Grock, Max, Whimsical Walker, Toto, *Coquelin*, the Fratellini, W. C. Fields, Grimaldi.

Have just reviewed Sir George Arthur's *From Phelps to Gielgud* which teems with misprints. " Jane Harding " for Jane Hading, " Madge Titteradje " for Madge Titheradge, " A. S. Walkley " and so on. In my review I have noted over a score. Also a riot of wrong French accents. Best, perhaps, is the pronouncement that Ackerley's *The Prisoners of War* illustrated " the deadly, and demoralizing, dullness of interment in Switzerland." Am pointing out that interment in Switzerland is no duller than anywhere else !

Jan. 25 Jock delivers his Adjudication :
Saturday.

J. A.'s challenge to I. B. was " to produce a page of verse as good as " the best of Stephen Phillips'. This arose from I. B.'s observation that " if a youth of any verbal profusion and talent for pastiche had soaked himself in Tennyson, dined in Soho with a bottle of the more vehement Chianti, and then let drive he could hardly help hitting the target." If I. B. succeeded in this imposition, J. A. would be happy to offer I. B. and Mrs. I. B. " the best possible dinner outside Soho and the beadiest bubbles winking at the brim."

I. B. has produced sixty-three lines which quite fail to do what was asked, and fail in two ways. One, they are not " as good as " but much better than Phillips'. They do, in fact, damn Stephen for aye, because they prove that his imitations of poetry can be reproduced by application of sheer intellect. Two, they are not true pastiche but pure parody.

Exception must be made, however, in favour of lines 41–50 which are genuine and brilliant pastiche, in that they attain to the intense inane of Phillipine breathlessness:

> Dust is our matter, but the soul is air,
> Pure air and moteless, such as Helicon
> Laps to the lungs of Muses and the Seven
> Entrancèd breathe and vow the draught divine,
> Air such as fans Olympus, murmurous air
> Cool as a maiden's fingers on the brow
> Of purple-dark Parnassus when the grape
> Is passionate for plucking, air that thrills
> To play on Tempe's rivulets and pass
> Cascading into coronals of foam.

This passage hits the bull's-eye, whereas most of the rest is too comic even to reach the target.

In the circumstances the Adjudicator thinks that I. B. only just wins and that J. A. ought still to provide him with a luncheon, for preference at the Savage Club on a wet Sunday just after the bar closes. The Adjudicator will gladly provide Mrs. I. B. with a better luncheon elsewhere on a finer day.

A. D.

Feb. 1 *Saturday.* A confused week. Went to Brighton last Saturday and stayed quietly till after the King's funeral. On Wednesday went with Harry Preston to the Petersen–Harvey fight at Wembley. Harvey stalled all the way through and Petersen was given the decision on points. Rightly. And it is *dramatically* wrong for the challenger in a championship bout to rely on his defence. While I was at Brighton I read Neil Bell's new novel *Strange Melody* in connection with which a strange thing happened. Some time ago Brother Mycroft had a curious form of brain-fag, that of continually fancying when he was reading that he had read it all before. What I thought was a similar attack came on towards the end of Bell's novel, and I was much relieved to find that the binders had bound Chapter xxi twice over! I must not let my preoccupation with carelessness and mistakes develop into an obsession. All the same, why must the "Q" Theatre in the programme for Tait and Allott's *The Prickly Pear* mis-spell the names of both authors? By the way, Peters insists on alluding to my protégés as "Hake and Halibut." Wicked, but witty.

Nothing more to record except a card from Edward:

When am I to be invited to Antrim Mansions? Ever? Never? Or may I come when I like? I still have boots!

Feb. 2 *Sunday.* Came back from lunch to-day with the news that Chapman & Hall would pay an unreasonable advance for a book by me and/or a reasonable advance for a book by Jock. Jock: "I haven't the time and you haven't the talent!"

Here is what I wrote about Hake and Halibut's play:

Q. *Wednesday, January* 29.

THE PRICKLY PEAR

A Comedy.

By Kenneth Allott and Stephen Tait.

Byron at least had the decency to space his tantrums; the heroine of this comedy knows nothing of any such mitigation. Tantra Coventry—for it is absurd to pretend that her name is Judith—starts the evening in a boiling rage and keeps it up for three hours, at the end of which the meekest member of the audience feels that a bucket of cold water is the only cure.

Why is Tantra in such a rage? Because she is in love with Simon who is always running after other women. What courses are open to a wife in such circumstances? I suggest either to put up with her husband's infidelities and say nothing, or fly into a royal temper and decline to put up with them. Tantra, being exquisitely feminine, adopts the middle course of condoning the infidelities and making rows about them less suitable to a drawing-room than the Edgware Road after closing time.

The piece (*a*) has no plot, (*b*) has a plotlet as intricate as an Elizabethan comedy, (*c*) depends for its interest on that simulation of plot which is character developed in terms of dialogue. I don't mind! Were it not that both these young authors are masters of dialogue, the piece would be insufferably tedious. (Nobody cares tuppence whether Tantra divorces, drowns herself, or becomes a repertory actress.) That they are masters of dialogue admits of no doubt to anybody who has ears to hear but no room to quote. Some of it is monkey brilliance—"What am I to say to that?" "You can go and recite 'The Ancient Mariner' backwards till your teeth drop out!" But there is better talk in the play than this, and the authors will write something good and, what is more, marketable as soon as they can hit upon a plot and realise that plays of one passion, two sexes, three acts, and four people have been so overworked as to become more boring to watch than a goods train shunting.

Miss Mary Newcombe played Tantra as though she were the Judith of old. Most of the play's action is concerned

with the hanging of a pair of curtains, and as Miss Newcombe clomb the step-ladder the tin-tack in her hand began to look like the nail which Judith buried in the head of . . . but perhaps I am thinking of another story ! The truth is that Miss Newcombe carries too many guns for a character whose signature-tune is Othello's: " Excellent wretch ! Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee ! " Simon loved Tantra, and perdition duly caught his soul, and the actress to play the modern, tea-cup variety of perdition is, of course, Miss Gertrude Lawrence. Whereas Miss Newcombe filled the Kew empyrean with Juno-like rages. Very fine, but too large.

Feb. 3 *Monday.* Must really get more exercise. A liver attack having declared itself in full force in addition to the catarrh, went down to Woking yesterday with Monty. On the first green the hole danced about so much that I took four putts to get anywhere near it. A bit better later on, and good fours at the tenth and one or two other holes and a nice five at the fourteenth where we finished wasn't too bad for a liverish old gentleman plastered with thermogene from neck to navel. Came back looking and feeling ten years younger, and quite satisfied with my game. The great thing when you haven't played for months is to be content with tiny drives, wee spoon-shots, insinuating irons and miniature mashies. The ball goes just as far. Conversely, on the greens you should go up to your ball boldly and hit it like a man. It won't go too far.

In the evening saw some third-rate all-in wrestling at a filthy little hall where the best seats cost half-a-crown. I judged it to be complete fake throughout, but fake very well done with some admirable tumbling. How little serious it was became obvious when one of the wrestlers threw *the referee*, and presently the ref. kicked the wrestler who was standing at full height in the face ! By " kicked " I mean he put the sole of his gym. shoe over the man's mouth and nostrils and pushed him over, proving incidentally that the ref. was a bit of an acrobat too. Plenty of Cockney humour. Once when the proceedings were a bit slow a voice from the back said gloomily: " Put a record on ! " And when they livened up and

one fellow bumped another's head against the floor the same voice said, even more gloomily: " Summons 'im ! "

Feb. 4 Letter from Hake:
Tuesday.

Newcastle-on-Tyne.
3rd February 1936.

DEAR JAMES AGATE,

It was good to see you bring the play to life again in the *Sunday Times* just when it looked like dying miserably with a brief obituary in Friday's *Telegraph* and a few lines in the *Evening News*. I was very pleased, and very flattered too. Not that your notice was a riotous one: it was fair. There's no getting away from the fact that the piece is incredibly thin. Yes, even I felt that. And you were right about the acting. And you were right about Gertrude Lawrence, and I hate to admit it but I've never seen it till lately.

Lest I appear too fulsome in agreeing with you too much let me say that you might, in these days of jerry-built and slovenly made plays, have said a word about our incomparable mastery of construction, that it was unnecessary to infer that the play is not marketable (though heaven knows you are certainly right to a great extent). I realise you were determined to be fair, and here I think you were being scrupulously fair, which generally means unfair.

The whole company were from what little I saw of them charming, kind, considerate, and keenly interested in everything that might have to do with the play's success. But no amount of their charm can blind me to the imperfections. And I am not trying to lay any blame on to anyone else's shoulders. We were certainly to blame in one or two instances.

It's all been rather wonderful, and we have learnt one or two things. We have even learnt that we must have a plot if only to give the audience something to talk about to their friends.

I was sorry I couldn't have a few words with you at least on the telephone. Allott lost your letter which had your address and number on. I'm racking my memory and trusting to luck that this will find you.

And I can't say anything else but thank you.

Yours sincerely,
STEPHEN TAIT.

Feb. 5 *Wednesday.* The Cuban Dancers in Cochran's new revue, *Follow the Sun*, made so much noise last night that my head this morning is still aching.

Feb. 6 *Thursday.* Letter from George Mathew:

Haverstock Hill,
*N.W.*3.

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

You said you wondered what sort of success the B.B.C. would make of its attempt to broadcast the scene in the foyer at the Adelphi before the new Cochran revue. Having listened-in to that ineffable, that melancholy item, I am in a position to tell you. The thing was so infeasible that it achieved a kind of perfection. Cochran need look no further if he wants some material for a sketch in his *next* revue. I won't swear to the precise words or the order of the lines, but the following is a fair summary of what fell upon our incredulous ears.

B.B.C. ANNOUNCER. We are now going to take you over to the Adelphi Theatre, where Mr. X will describe for you the scene in the foyer before the production of Mr. Cochran's *Follow the Sun.*

Mr. X. Hello, everybody. Here I am in the foyer of the Adelphi Theatre. It's ten minutes yet before the show opens, but people are crowding in and there's scarcely room to move. It's rather like a Rugby scrum in white ties. Let me see if I can pick out some of the celebrities. Of course, everybody who is anybody is here, but it's rather difficult for me to tell you their names because to tell you the truth I can't see anybody I know. (! ! ! !) Oh, there's Mr. Smith. I don't suppose you've ever heard of him, but he's a big man behind the scenes—he books thousands of seats and is present at all important first nights. Hello, Mr. Smith, glad to see you. Are you looking forward to the show?

Mr. SMITH. Yes. I'm very glad to be present.

MR. X. I suppose you didn't see it at Manchester?

MR. SMITH. Oh, no.

MR. X. Oh, good!

(As for us listeners, we are delighted!)

MR. X. Er, well thank you very much, Mr. Smith. Now let me see what other interesting people I can get to speak to you. Time's getting on now and the air is becoming tense

with excitement. Oh, there goes Irene Vanbrugh, but I'm afraid I can't reach her. Ah, there goes Mr. Gordon Selfridge —at least I think it is Mr. Gordon Selfridge. And there are some of the gentlemen of the Press, but we don't want to talk to that sort of person, do we ? Oh, and here's someone who will perhaps say a few words to you—Mr. Henry Hall. (No doubt he will, Mr. X, but that's no thrill to us. We've heard him about ten thousand times on the air already.)

Mr. X. Hullo, Henry, how are you ?

Mr. Henry Hall. Hullo ! Oh, I'm very well.

Mr. X. I suppose you'll soon be playing some of the tunes out of this show ?

Mr. Hall. Yes, I expect I shall.

Mr. X. Well so long for now, Henry.

Mr. Hall. So long.

(*They both laugh uneasily—or is it too easily ?*)

Mr. X. Ah. there's Mr. Philip Guedalla. Good evening, Mr. Guedalla. Will you say a few words into the microphone ?

Mr. Guedalla. Good evening, everybody. I have great pleasure in declaring this bazaar open. Good night, everybody ! (This was the one good thing.)

Mr. X. Well, time is getting *very* short now. I think I'd better be thinking of getting into the auditorium. People are crowding in faster than ever. There goes the bell. I shall now leave you for a few moments and describe the scene to you from the auditorium.

. . . . . .

Mr. X. Well, here I am inside the auditorium. Most of the people are in their seats and there's a feeling of tense excitement in the air. There's Mr. Cochran in his box . . . I wonder what is going on behind that curtain ? I suppose the artists are all wondering how the show is going to go and what sort of reception they are going to get. At any moment now the orchestra will strike up—they are all in their places except the conductor. The air grows even more tense with excitement—in fact the excitement in the air is really most tense. Ah, here comes the conductor. Now I must leave you, ladies and gentlemen, and you will hear the first ten minutes of the show. Good night, everybody !

We then hear the Overture and what appears to be a prologue, but as Mr. Cochran's revues depend entirely on

spectacle and we can't see anything, the prologue is to us merely the Dawn of Nothing!

My dear Jimmie, what *does* the B.B.C. think it is up to?

Yours, as ever,
GEORGE.

Last night's new play at the Royalty, Bridie's *Storm in a Teacup*, was largely redeemed by Sara Allgood. At each and every one of this actress's exits the stage manager should turn the lights up a shade to prevent the audience from thinking that they have gone down.

The Times tripped to-day rather badly. It ended its third leader:

> There is practical wisdom, as well as rosy optimism, in the poet's battle-cry that "we fall to rise, are *worsted* to fight better, sleep to wake."

Better, I suggest, the practical wisdom of the trusty Bartlett than the rosy optimism of Memory.

Feb. 10 *Monday.* For three days the whole country has been cowering under an icy wind, numbing mind and body. Non-journalists stayed indoors, and on Saturday night the West End was empty.

Jock tells me of a dinner-party at John Gielgud's—"it managed to be at once august and frivolous." Somebody putting on a record of the Quintet from the *Seraglio*, Noel was heard to remark: "Odd how I get no kick out of this arch music!"

Feb. 11 *Tuesday.* The Chaplin film. Until last week there were four absolute silences—Outer Space, the grave, the Sphinx, and Charlie Chaplin's. To-day, Tuesday, February 11, 1936, the number of those silences was reduced to three, since in *Modern Times* Chaplin's voice was heard for the first time. It would not be true to say that Charlie spoke, because he didn't. He sang, and his singing was enough to destroy something which all the world had cherished. The point is not whether Chaplin sang well or ill; he destroyed a

mystery. This song of Chaplin's is forgivable only if it is unique, and if never again under any pretext whatever he utters spoken or singing word. *Loquor et qualis artifex pereo !* should be written in letters of gold on every wall in Charlie Chaplin's studio; this may be dog-Latin, but it is good enough for a hang-dog little fellow who is, and can ever be, without a peer. Chaplin is, as all the world knows, a man of education, and probably knows Matthew Arnold's lines:

> And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
> Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
> Didst walk on earth unguess'd at. Better so !

Half the secret of that wistful tramp, that pilgrim of eternity in a finer sense than Byron ever knew, lies in the fact that he has walked the silent screen guessed at by all the world, yet never wholly revealed. Other film actors, Mr. Chaplin, abide our question. You are free, on condition that you for ever hold your peace.

Feb. 13 Letter in to-day's *Times*:
Thursday.

SIR:—I vouch for this, which happened to-day:

TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBER: "I have been dialling 'Operator' for four minutes. Suppose my house had been on fire ?"

OPERATOR: "Is it ?"

SUBSCRIBER: "No."

OPERATOR: "Then what are you bothering about ?"

I am, etc.,
JAMES AGATE.

The Savage Club, Feb. 12.

Feb. 21 The chauffeur having left, the old problem once
Friday. again arises and is once more settled. Garage sends round one Charles, alleged to be model of all the virtues and a fine driver. Believe the first but not the second. He nearly fainted on hearing he was engaged, owing to $2\frac{1}{2}$ months' semi-starvation. Recovering, asked if he could have afternoon off ! Why ? To visit sick wife in hospital and arrange disposition of baby during wife's illness. Must therefore

dispatch fruit and flowers to Missus, Glaxo and Allenbury's to Baby, out of all proportion to mileage driven, which is nil. Finally, am convinced young man has never driven a car in his life!

Feb. 22 *Saturday.* At supper at the Savage Club last night we all played a game of having ten minutes in which to set down the twenty-five best pieces of acting we had seen. This is as absurd as to compile a list of the twenty-five best books—the field is too big. Still it is fun to see which performances first come to mind without time for second thoughts, and I was amused this morning to find that I did not include either Charles Laughton, John Gielgud, Marie Tempest, Edith Evans, or Bergner, and horrified at the omission of Lunt and Fontanne. Here is my list:

Sarah in *Phèdre.*
Sarah in *La Dame aux Camélias.*
Sarah in *Pelléas et Mélisande.*
Réjane in *Zaza.*
Guitry in *Pasteur.*
Coquelin in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.*
Irving in *The Lyons Mail.*
Ellen Terry in *Much Ado About Nothing.*
Mrs. Kendal in *The Likeness of the Night.*
Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*
Forbes-Robertson in *Hamlet.*
Jean Forbes-Robertson in *Twelfth Night.*
Benson in *Richard II.*
Laurence Irving as Justice Shallow in *Henry IV.*
Frank Rodney as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet.*
James Welch in *The New Clown.*
Hawtrey in *The Man from Blankley's.*
Fay Compton in *Mary Rose.*
Sybil Thorndike in *Saint Joan.*
Mme. Pitoëff in Schnitzler's *La Ronde.*
Janet Achurch in *A Doll's House.*
Janet Achurch in *Antony and Cleopatra.*
John Hare in *The Gay Lord Quex.*
Clare Eames in *The Unquiet Spirit.*
Hilda Trevelyan in *A Kiss for Cinderella.*

Feb. 23 *Sunday.* Charles turns out to be magnificent driver and a quiet, well-behaved young man. Drove to Birmingham on Friday night and to Gainsborough next morning, where I stood in the middle of a Lincolnshire fen looking at horses in a blizzard. Actually on a high and dry plateau in an icy wind. Snow came on later. Took Albert to supper at the Queen's Hotel, Birmingham. Bed at Three Tuns, but attack of asthma made it impossible to lie down and had to spend the night sitting up in a chair, which served me quite right. Could have taken the car into the field where the horses were and sat in it, but didn't think of this ! Saw one magnificent pony, but nothing in my opinion as good as Ego. Spent Sunday morning at Albert's, but had the sense to keep in the boxes, weather still being very cold.

Arrived home about 7 and, the excitement of seeing the horses over, felt rather seedy, so had the doctor round who gave me an injection and a wigging. The stuff he shoved in my arm showed that medicine has caught up with Dr. Johnson who thought the world knew enough about ballooning and preferred " something to ease an asthma."

Feb. 24 *Monday.* Much better this morning, but furious to see that the *S.T.* has printed me as saying that everybody in a Tchehov play talks " *19* to the dozen." Again I must say how I loathe and detest and abominate this vulgarity, which is excusable in a notebook but not in a piece of writing. But the *S.T.* will not hear sense in the matter. It is what is called " the rule of the paper," which will cheerfully print " 15 men on a dead man's chest " or " 4 and 20 blackbirds baked in a pie." Temper restored when Jock showed me a postcard from Eiluned Lewis who is in India tiffining with Viceroys and elephant-riding with Maharajahs: " I shall be too proud to be bullied by you and J. A. on Saturdays after this ! "

And now here is Jock's notice of *After October* written in exactly one hour. This definitely marks his emergence from the apprentice stage:

It has for some time been clear that Mr. Rodney Ackland

would write a good play. It now seems clear, from the production at the Arts Theatre of *After October*, that he may come to write a masterpiece. Considerable portions and even whole scenes of his new essay belong to a masterpiece. Yet the whole thing is no masterpiece, not even a good play, though it amounts in all to the most brilliant evening in the theatre since last summer's *Old Ladies*.

In the theatre this dazzling but perverse playwright engages us much after the fashion of some dazzling but perverse pianist in a country house drawing-room when rain twinkles outside. He will play no complete thing, but only scraps from the masters with witty modulations and improvisings of his own coming between the scraps. Thus we are given a whole page of Tchehov, a cadence from Ibsen, three trembling golden bars of Turgeniev, a sinister motif from Strindberg, or a pert modern harmonising of a strain from Tom Robertson, all these interleaved with the latter-day impishness of Ackland.

Mrs. Rhoda Monkhams has once been an understudy at the Gaiety and now keeps a frowsy flat near Hampstead Heath. She has a clever son who writes, a vain daughter who has married a Frenchman, and a fussing friend and a fiendish neighbour and other worrying offspring; and her furniture is for ever on the point of being collected, since all her purchases are hire. Life for her alternates between panics and pettings, and in her big heart she secretly enjoys it all. The little family and all who attach themselves to it are genuinely like the people who live round us; they have hopes and fears and larks and pangs and partings. As in life, no reconciliation is allowed to resolve itself, no quarrel to proceed, without an alien interruption. Meals have to be prepared, and washing-up to be done, and darning and ironing must precede the most romantic occasion—in this case the production of the clever son's play.

This fails, but its Scandinavian rights are sold. The gad-about daughter finds London unresponsive, but gets an engagement in Toulon and leaves her husband with his overwhelmed mother-in-law. A sad young lady who is paying guest refuses the Poona-Peshawar bore who brings her roses—a character made the more pitifully real by a glimmering awareness of his own tedium—and then decides to throw in her lot with the playwright who loves her. There are a hundred other details to be relished in a play

crammed with details and nothing else. These details have pattern too, and subtlety, and abundant wit. All that is lacking is a theme, a general gesture.

Miss Mary Clare leads a cast of eleven artists, and all act as though inspired by the excellence of their matter. Mr. Peter Godfrey should have a particular word of praise for his appalling picture of a rancid truth-spiller, and Miss Merle Tottenham for restoring the balance with her heavenly maidservant, who has found all the earthly salvation she wants in cinema loving and good service. *After October* is too chilly a title for a little play that is warm with new humanity.

A. D.

I shall not give any more of Jock's articles because he will obviously want them for a collection of his own. At the same time I make no excuses for the room he takes up in this Diary. Would Johnson have craved indulgence for observations upon Boswell?

Feb. 25 *Tuesday.* R. H. Gretton, formerly London correspondent to *The Manchester Guardian*, died yesterday after an operation. It is only a few weeks since we met. I liked him much.

Letter from Edward quoting Voltaire on Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "It will be famous for ever; nobody reads it."

Quiet day culminating in an astounding post: three *receipted* bills and nothing else!

Feb. 26 *Wednesday.* Propose to swap the Humber for a new car. Surrender sale of Humber (£165) less amount still owing on H.P. (£102–18–0) leaves me a balance of £62 which is virtually the first payment on something else. Actually I hope to get the new car put on the road for round about £25 while the instalments go on as usual. This seems better business than most of my car deals. Saw my old Bentley in Pass and Joyce's show-room. It's a fascinating white elephant and I nearly fell for it again! Seymour Brown is a genius who could sell me St. Paul's if he were to put wheels under it, but were not also anxious to protect me from my more outrageous follies.

Feb. 27 *Thursday.* The interest in last night's play, Bernstein's *Promise*, consisted for me in the war of styles between Edna Best and Madge Titheradge, respective champions of the quietist and rampageous schools of acting. Edna is our finest exponent of what I call back-bedroom martyrdom. Her Tessa in Margaret Kennedy's play put her at the top of all that *attic* breed of maidens overwrought, nymphs constant equally to glumness and to spirituality. Duse was a past-mistress at this sort of thing, which has this advantage that you do not need to be what the vulgar call an actress in order to pull it off. You do not have to alter your voice, change your expression, vary your gestures or even make any. The essence of the job is to sit still and suggest that " infinity upon thee broods, and thou art full of whispers and of shadows." When Duse first brought this sort of thing over, the highbrows cottoned on to it like anything. Walkley laid it down that acting can imitate only external things, gestures, accents, and looks, and that what makes it an art is the spirit that informs it and is expressed through it. And a lot more about the actor who, attempting to express what is not in his own spirit, ceases to be an artist and becomes a hypocrite in the Greek sense of one who presents effects divorced from causes. Duse, according to A. B. W., was not an old-fashioned actress but the new artist expressing her own soul. I remember Arthur Symons saying somewhere that " action, with Duse as with Rimbaud, is a way of spoiling something." What this can only mean is that if last night Edna had attempted to act instead of just being, she would have spoiled the lot. Madge, who is a magnificent technician, cannot possibly hold with this nonsense. She would rather hold, I imagine, that a leading lady earned her money too easily by just walking on to the stage, pulling up the blinds of her soul, and doing nothing more about it.

Now comes a point not always too clearly perceived. Either an actress is a Duse or a Bernhardt; either she sits still and is, or moves about and pretends. No actress can escape from her temperament and personality, and there is no more merit in belonging to the one kind than to the other. But

it is also true that to be a Duse takes a great deal less out of the actress than to be a Bernhardt. Moping—ineffably, if you like, but still moping—can be done while the actress is calculating her income-tax, whereas I defy anybody to bring off simultaneously mental arithmetic and any of the great tirades in *Phèdre*. The difference in difficulty between the two schools is the difference between the first and the last movements of the Moonlight Sonata. I will undertake to play the first movement so nearly well that a listener would merely think Moiseiwitsch had got chilblains. Whereas if I attempted the last he would think Benno had broken all his fingers and sprained both wrists. B. told me the other day about some provincial recital at which he had played the G Minor Organ Fugue of Bach " in the one unforgivable way." I asked which way and he said: " Nonchalantly ! "

Feb. 28 *Friday.* Met a man to-day who whenever he hears " God Save the King " gets asthma ! The poor fellow is a great lover of opera, and after every Wagnerian crisis has to retire to the cloak-room to inject adrenalin.

Feb. 29 *Saturday.* Letter from a *Daily Express* reader beginning, " Dear Mr. Clever " and going on to defend the modern detective story:

> You wrote recently that any competent reviewer knows at sight why the dead body of a major-general should be found protruding from a battleship's smoke-stack, and why the bishop's wife, wearing only one stocking, should be found strangled with the other on top of a gasometer. I shall be glad if you will solve this one at sight. A stock-broker says good-bye to his wife at the garden gate and walks towards the station down a road in which there are no turnings and no side-roads. When the wife gets to the front door she turns round to wave to her husband as usual but he has disappeared, it being ascertained afterwards that he did not enter any of the houses.

It seemed to me that this had to be answered immediately, and so Jock took down:

DEAR MR. STUPID,

Solved in ·1 seconds. An axiom has been defined as "something so obvious that you cannot see it." Obviously your stockbroker walked into one of Mr. Drage's vans so plain that the wife didn't notice it.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES CLEVER.

March 1 *Sunday.* Went to the Palladium to smoke and hear Cortot. The piano was, I suspect, a French make, precise and metallic like the French language.

Half-way through the programme the King's Address to the Nation was broadcast. His Majesty reminded us how, as Prince of Wales, he had acquainted himself with all manners of men and their ways of living, and hinted that as King he should not forget what he had learned as Prince. Monarchs are not of a literary turn of mind, or there would have been an opportunity here for a nice re-fashioning of Henry the Fifth's words to Falstaff:

> Presume all that I am the man I was;
> For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
> That I still knit me to my former self
> And kingly keep the princely company.

March 2 *Monday.* In one of my early books I wrote that the lavatory attendant at Scott's made more money out of his job than I did out of mine as a dramatic critic. That was true. The point now is that I heard yesterday that the old boy died four days after Christmas. He was an ex-jockey, name of Manning, and on his days off would go to Epsom where somebody who remembered him found him a nag and gave him a gallop. He was out for a ride in the bitter weather of Boxing Day, caught cold and died. He was seventy-five.

March 3 *Tuesday.* Arnold Bennett's Letters to his Nephew contain this superb justification for using French whenever a writer pleases: "Many thanks for the gifts, qui sont épatants. Surtout le muffler."

Apropos of Bennett and the new *Pride and Prejudice* piece,

am completely exhausted with the effort to get my papers to spell Elizabeth Bennet with a "z" and only one "t." Effort successful in one case only.

March 5 Thursday. Funked *Rosmersholm* last night and let George Bishop go. About four this morning was roused by a persistent cry, so eerie and plaintive that I knocked up Fred and asked if he thought it was a little dog in pain. He said: "No, it's a common noise round Hampstead. It's a wild duck!"

March 6 Friday. Grand Chopin recital by Horowitz last night:

Polonaise Fantasie in A flat, op. 61.
Barcarolle, op. 60.
Sonata in B flat minor, op. 35.
Scherzo No. 4, in E major, op. 54.
Five Études, including the B minor, op. 25, No. 10.
Mazurka in C sharp minor.
Polonaise in A flat major, op. 53.

As pianism it was dazzling like Sarah's acting, Rastelli's juggling, Macartney's batting and the Three Eddies' tap-dancing all put together. At lunch to-day Moiseiwitsch, who is the most generous of souls as well as the most critical of artists, described Horowitz's playing as: "Noble and full of genuine sentiment. He is incapable of a vulgar thought either in his fingers or his brain. Extraordinary range of delicacy and power. Still a little young and the middle wants filling in. The line is not perfect yet but it will be, for there is no limit to his development in any direction." M. added that, though he had never heard Liszt, he thought Horowitz the nearest approach to him that the world has seen.

Four a.m. Have just come in from the best evening I have had for many years. Ronald Squire took me to supper at the Garrick, where we were joined by Seymour Hicks, Freddie Lonsdale and Peter Page. The talk was brilliant, I am sore with laughing, and all of it was distressingly incommunicable. Seymour, at sixty-six, in gorgeous spirits and at the acme of his clowning best. Told us of Terriss, ravishingly lovely as

Mercutio and dazzling everybody at rehearsal, pulled up by Irving saying " That line—' Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh '—what d'ye suppose that means, my boy ? " And Terriss replying, " Blessed if I know, Guv'nor ! " Of Mrs. Kendal terrifying to the point of a heart attack some wretch who had to make love to her. I shall never forget Seymour going down on all fours to imitate the toothless, clawless old lion which got loose at the Coliseum, walked on to the stage and sniffed at the conductor's coat-tails. He sounded and looked exactly like the poor dazed beast. An evening of grand stories and brilliant pantomime.

March 8 *Sunday.* Germany's re-occupation of the Rhineland zone may mean the end of all things. But until that happens I shall still be annoyed when I find such a mess as my article in the *S.T.* this morning, which read all right at ten o'clock last night when I made some minor alterations. " *Red Night* and girding on her armour, leaped on to a war plays," is a charming sentence.

And if poison gas were coming in at the window I should still choke with protest at Fox Strangways's notice in *The Observer* of Horowitz's recital on Thursday. Here it is in full:

> Mr. Horowitz's intense, cold technical concentration, his brilliance, his magical pianistic refinements, were as astonishing as ever. Yet many must have come away empty from his Chopin recital at Queen's Hall on Thursday. He is such a very moderate musician, and makes his instrument splutter rather than sing. All he did was so brittle, so restless, so very sophisticated, so lacking in tenderness and nobility, in colour, in imagination, in depth and breadth. There remained just the exciting clarity of his technique.

Now compare Newman:

> Mr. Horowitz's Chopin recital, which included the rarely-heard Polonaise-Fantasie, brought us an evening's Chopin playing of the first order. Avoiding the easy superficial " effects " that make so many star pianists a trial to the flesh in a Chopin programme, Mr. Horowitz gave us everything possible in the way of virtuoso pianism but at the

same time made all this just a means to an end, not the end itself. One had the grateful feeling all the time that one was listening in the first place to Chopin, following the natural evolution of the train of ideas that constitutes this work or that. The superlatively beautiful thing in an evening of sheer beauty was perhaps Mr. Horowitz's playing of the Funeral March in the B flat minor sonata, which was perfect in line, in nuance and in sentiment.

Our Ernest may have his faults, chief of which is his obsession with Wagner's sleeping arrangements. But he knows piano-playing when he hears it, and does not fall into the trap of thinking that a roof-shaking executant can't be a musician.

March 16 *Monday.* A hell of a week, in the course of which they wanted to do it on me with Ibsen's *Master Builder*. But I just wouldn't have it, and Eiluned did it for the *S.T.* The poor dear just sat down in front of this hurdle and said what a beauty it was, Jock in the *M.G.* crawled gracefully underneath it, and I just wrote a column article saying I was too old for hurdling.

My one ray of sunshine has been a letter from a lady containing this passage: " I saw *Hedda Gabler* once years ago and did not like it though, of course, my mind may not have been up to that vintage. It was at Derby and Mrs. Pat Campbell's first night there: what pleased me were her furious asides to the scene-shifters."

My day:

7.30. Sat up in bed writing first draft of Ronnie and Kenneth's Poltergeist (see under).

11.30. Rose, cat-licked less than usual, and rushed down to rehearsal at Queen's Hall to which Benno had invited me. Heard the conductor tell one of the horns who looked as English as a sergeant-major to play *piano et macabre.*

1.30. Took Benno and Mrs. Moiseiwitsch to lunch at the Jardin des Gourmets.

3.0. Slept through an act of a deliriously dull play at the Westminster. All about Toussaint L'Ouverture, which Jock says means " coughing through the overture."

4.0. Revised draft of Poltergeist.

6.0. Skimmed one good and three bad books and knocked up some sort of article for the *D.E.* (Jock says best book article for months, but that's only because I took him to the rehearsal this morning.)

8.15. L.S.O. Concert. Lovely programme. "Benvenuto Cellini" Overture. Grand. Two reasons why Berlioz is unpopular in this country—nine-tenths of musical critics have not the ears to hear him, and the public, not knowing whether to sound the " z " or not, is shy of mentioning him. It will be eighty years before the work of this composer ceases to be what the American book-reviewer calls a " flop d'estime." Issay Dobrowen is a Jack-in-the-box Beechamesque conductor. But then I like a conductor to conduct, and hate the abstruse fellow who thinks things out in front of his orchestra and waggles a stick with a beat as tame as a policeman's. Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini. Benno says that the difference between this and the Brahms Variations is that in Brahms the technical difficulties are surmountable. Tschaikowsky No. 5, in which George Mathew takes a bath of spiritual treacle, and I wallow with him. Willow, wallow, waly !

10.30. Supper at Savage Club, and bridge with Benno, George Bishop and a large nice man name of Phillips who plays the viola. Hold grand cards all night and win 7,900 points—at a shilling a hundred, thank Heaven, and not a mingy 3*d.*

3.30. Have a final look at the Poltergeist stuff.

4.0. Am now going to bed.

March 17 *Tuesday.* Here is my ghost story:

I have always sworn that if anything psychic happened to me or came within my ken, I would investigate it with maximum ruthlessness. In all the accounts I have ever read of the supernatural, evidence has been accepted which would not convict a tramp of stealing a pair of boots.

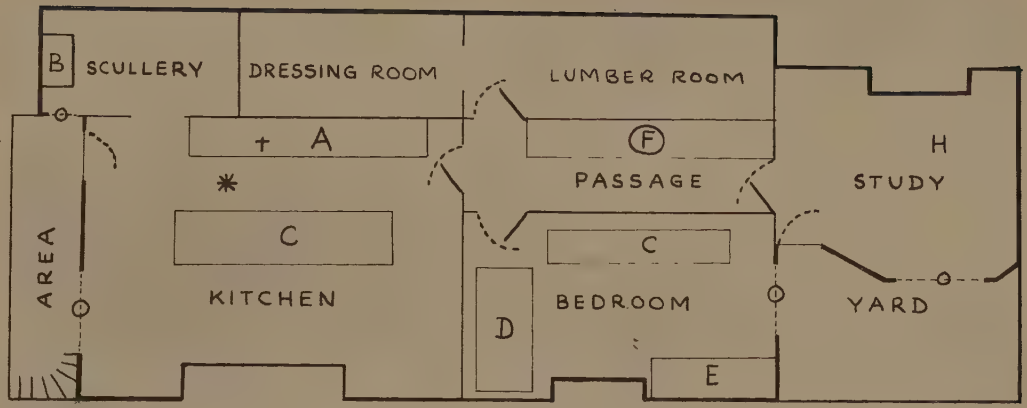
Only last week the B.B.C. conducted an enquiry into an alleged haunted house. The investigators placed a thermograph in the cellar and because it registered variations led

us to infer the possibility of something ghostly. Why, in heaven's name, did they not simultaneously place another thermograph in the cellar of a non-haunted house in the immediate neighbourhood and see how that behaved? As they failed to do this one could attach no more importance to their investigations than if they had been conducted by Dogberry and Verges.

The following events were told to me on Saturday afternoon as having happened on Friday morning in a flat at which I had supped on the previous night. This is a ground floor and basement in a well-found house in a good square. My friends, Ronnie and Kenneth, live principally in the basement, the ground floor containing their drawing-room, the house-boy's bedroom and rooms reserved for Ronnie's two sisters and his four-year-old niece. The child's father, an officer in the merchant service, is abroad. The basement contains a bed-sitting-room, the study in which Ronnie writes, a small dressing-room, a small lumber room, a large kitchen and a good sized scullery. It is a warren of a place for the understanding of which I shall refer the readers to the map. A good part of the kitchen, but not the dresser, when the door is open can be seen from the stairs, and the foot of the stairs can be seen from the bedroom when the door is open. Now follows the story as it was told to me on Saturday afternoon. I obtained three separate accounts but have run them together to spare the reader the tedium of collating.

Frank is the house-boy with whom the story starts and here follow the accounts given in the words of this young man, who came to his present employers at the beginning of the year, and of his two employers:

FRANK (*house-boy, aged* 18¾): I gave Mr. Ronald and Mr. Kenneth their tea, took the cups and saucers off the tray and put them in the scullery and went back into the kitchen with the tray which was quite empty. I put the tray on the dresser and it jumped back at me as if it was in a temper. Thinking it had hit something, I put it back again, when it again jumped back at me only in a more harder way. Seeing that nothing was behind it the second time put the wind up



A = DRESSER 12 ft LONG
B = SINK
C = TABLE
D = BED

E = DIVAN
F = STAIRS
H = DESK
† = TRAY WAS PUT HERE

✳ = TRAY FELL HERE
O = BARRED WINDOWS
KITCHEN & STUDY DOORS
ARE KEPT LOCKED

Plan of Ronnie and Kenneth's Flat

me. I rushed into the bedroom and told Mr. Ronald and Mr. Kenneth. Mr. Kenneth told me it was all boloney but I wouldn't go back into the kitchen until Mr. Kenneth put on his dressing-gown and came back into the kitchen with me.

KENNETH (*engaged in business, aged* 30): Demonstrating to Frank that it was his imagination, I picked the tray up and put it down again on two or three different places on the dresser. Nothing happened. I then dressed and went to the office leaving Frank washing up Thursday night's supper things in the scullery. As I left the house Ronnie was getting up.

FRANK: Half-way through my washing-up and about a quarter of an hour after Mr. Kenneth had left the house, I heard a terrific bang. I dashed out from the scullery into the kitchen and saw the tray lying on the floor and shaking violently. I was too frightened to step over the tray and went right round the kitchen table to get to the door, shouting for Mr. Ronald and half thinking he had been playing a joke on me. I ran into the bedroom but Mr. Ronald wasn't there. I then ran into the study but he wasn't there either. I then rushed upstairs, partly to find Mr. Ronald and, if I couldn't, to get out of the house. Hearing the bath-water running I knocked at the bathroom door and Mr. Ronald opened it.

RONNIE (*writer, aged* 36): I went into the bathroom between five and ten minutes after Kenneth had left the house. It takes me five minutes to shave during which time I heard nothing. Then Frank knocked at the door which I unlocked and opened. He told me what he has told you. At first I refused to hurry down as I just thought him to be imagining and know him to be a highly-strung boy. As, however, he was obviously in a state of great terror, I let him stay until I had finished shaving, about two minutes. Before having my bath I went downstairs with Frank and saw the tray lying on the floor, but without any sign of movement. I intended to pick the tray up, but Frank begged me not to touch it. So, leaving the tray on the floor, I took him into the bedroom and tried to calm him down. Then, with the idea of restoring his confidence, I ordered him to go into the kitchen and pick up the tray. He flatly refused. So we went into the kitchen together, *and from the door I saw the tray lying on the dresser in its usual position.*

I certify that from the moment Frank came into the bathroom he was never out of my sight; in fact he clung to me and never let go until we went into the kitchen and saw the tray on the dresser. My two sisters and the baby were still asleep upstairs.

There are people in the flat on the second floor, but nobody could have come down at any time without being seen and heard. Nobody has ever been known to come downstairs into our flat without invitation. If somebody had thrown the tray on to the floor, Frank, who immediately rushed in from the scullery, would have seen them. If anybody had come down to replace the tray I should have seen them from the bedroom, as the door was left wide open and the end of the staircase is in full view of the bed on which I deposited Frank while I was attempting to calm him.

As it stands this is a good story, but in view of my vow of ruthless investigation I am not content to leave it here. My object is not to tell a good yarn—which anybody can invent—but to seize the only opportunity which has ever presented itself to me of investigating such a matter.

In all Poltergeist stories, there are five possibilities to be taken into consideration:

(*a*) The facts are as stated.

(*b*) The narrators believe the facts to be as they state them though they may be otherwise, for it is well known that two highly intelligent observers, writing their account of even so simple a matter as a conjuring trick, will be found to disagree in their account of what happened and in what order.

(*c*) The whole thing is an invention.

(*d*) The thing is part-truth and part-hoax.

(*e*) Some totally unknown factor is present.

In each and every investigation it is to be borne in mind that the case may belong to (*a*) or (*c*), or alternatively any one of factors (*b*), (*d*), and (*e*) may be present singly or in any combination.

As to the evidence of the boy in the present case, I am

inclined to accept it. He is simple, young for his age which one would take to be fourteen, and, so far as one can gather, possessed of a highly emotional and even feminine temperament which his looks belie. If he is not telling the truth, then his account on Saturday afternoon of his past terror, and his present nervousness accruing with the reconstruction of the incidents, together make up a feat of acting worthy of Charles Laughton.

Let me, on the general matter of credibility, make one observation. Say that it is a million to one against an educated person, vouching for evidence, telling deliberate lies. On the other hand it is very much more than a million to one against a tray jumping about a room of its own volition, and I will more easily believe that George Washington was a wilful and brilliant liar than that the famous cherry tree chopped itself down of its own accord. In a murder trial the accused's guilt need not be proved beyond reasonable doubt. Before a psychic manifestation can be accepted *every* objection, however unreasonable, must be disposed of. I cannot prove that no one moved the tray in question because I cannot prove a negative, but I can assemble all *possible* happenings with a view to discovering whether any one arrangement of them, however improbable, will give a natural explanation. In doing this one must eliminate personal considerations, treat the *dramatis personæ* as symbols, and accept the possibility that any one or all of them may be lying. The personal element comes in when one is assessing probability, not possibility.

Let us agree that (*a*) there are two moments when the tray is alleged to have acted of its own volition and was not under observation, and that, if we ignore the supernatural, it could only be moved by somebody already inside the house or by somebody outside the house and having access at these moments. It is possible that some unknown person, intending to play a trick upon the house-boy, should have hidden in the dressing-room or lumber-room, but it is unreasonable to suppose that the playing of this trick would happen on the very morning on which the tray behaved in the extraordinary fashion first related by the house-boy, unless we are to assume

that at some subsequent time, by suggestion or even auto-suggestion, he was induced to believe that the tray " jumped back " at him. I think also, we can discard the possibility that on this particular morning and subsequent to the tray's alleged initial movements, somebody possessing a key to either the front door or basement door should have entered and twice played a motiveless trick and twice got away unobserved. The basement door at the time of these events was locked; the morning milk is deposited outside it, and that morning Frank opened the door as usual before giving Ronnie and Kenneth their morning tea. It is his practice to close the door which then automatically locks with a Yale, and we may assume it to have been locked.

I now come to the arrangement of possible happenings in which Ronnie and Kenneth are involved. According to Frank's statement, when the tray is thrown on to the floor Ronnie is in the bathroom and, according to Ronnie's statement, corroborated by Frank, neither Ronnie nor Frank touches it until both see it on the dresser.

This brings me to Kenneth, as to which there are three possible combinations:

(1) He does not go out of the house when he says he does, but hides in either the dressing-room or the lumber-room.

(2) He goes out of the house but returns after ten minutes entering either by the front door or the basement door. Entering by the front door he does not have to pass Frank who is in the scullery. Entering by the basement door he can, without being seen, pass Frank who has his back to him. On this assumption Kenneth turns back from his way to the office at which he is due solely in the hope of playing a trick on his man-servant.

(3) Kenneth, on the way to the office, remembers that he has forgotten something essential to him which he has left in his dressing-room. He returns, lets himself in by either door and having, or not having, passed Frank sees the tray on the dresser, throws it on the floor and disappears into the dressing-room before Frank has time to catch sight of him. Frank says that he " dashed out " of the scullery, but this

may be a misapprehension. Being already unnerved by the morning's previous events, he may hang back a second or two, which gives Kenneth time to get into the dressing-room. Frank then joins Ronnie in the bathroom. Two minutes elapse before they come down together and Kenneth does not come out of the dressing-room during this time, which, if he has been perpetrating a hoax, he will naturally have used to make his getaway. (People become extraordinarily keen about the success of even minor practical jokes.) But suppose Kenneth cannot find and is rummaging for the object for which he has returned? Ronnie then takes Frank into the bedroom, and Kenneth, having found the object, slips out of the dressing-room. He is not seen by Ronnie or Frank either because the one is engaged in soothing and the other in being soothed, or because they close the bedroom door, although they do not remember this. (It is a very heavy door, lined against draughts, which if opened wide remains open, but if half-opened closes again. But Ronnie says he remembers keeping his eye on the staircase.) Incidentally I have noticed that foot-falls are not easy to hear in this basement, and I remember that both Kenneth, Ronnie and the house-boy have appeared at the door without my having heard them arrive. Kenneth now resumes his journey to the office and one of two things happens. Either, being of a tidy mind, he picks up the tray before going to the front door or before going out by the basement door, in which case he must step over it on his way through the kitchen and the natural thing is to pick it up. He does not anticipate the further fright this will give Ronnie and Frank, but coming home in the evening and hearing their story of what they suppose to have happened after he has left the house, is amused by the combination of hoax—his share in handling the tray—and non-hoax—the tray's jumping back at Frank—which he keeps up. If the tray never did "jump back" then we are driven to the position that the whole thing is a combination of lying by the house-boy followed by the practical joking of an employer.

Kenneth, of course, vigorously denies that he acted in any way contrary to his sworn statement, but agrees that I must

not ignore this *possible* version of his actions, without which all the ground would not be covered.

Here I submit that I have covered all the ground except the possibility of somebody working the tray through the ceiling by means of invisible threads as in a puppet show.

And, of course, one last possibility remains. This is that Frank belongs to the class of hysterical subjects. The cunning of these is known to exceed mortal belief. The activities of the tray down to its arrival on the floor rest on his unsupported testimony. He may have thrown it there himself. And the tray may have been lifted up and put back on the dresser by a confederate hidden in the dressing-room or lumber-room (in which case he would have to slip unobserved past the bedroom door), or in the coal recess, or, *more simply*, in the scullery from which, when Ronnie has returned upstairs for his bath, he escapes by the basement door. This pre-supposes a carefully laid plan which, if it fails, involves dismissal. But suppose the house-boy for some reason or other, wanted to be dismissed ? He may have had an offer of higher wages and not liked to say so.[1]

I do not think that in his normal state Frank has the mentality to conceive all this, but I have no experience of mentality in conditions of hysteria. My friends and the house-boy have given me their word, and I have this bit of collateral evidence. The young man who cleans George Mathew's flat is a friend of Frank. He states that he saw Frank on Friday and that the boy was greatly distressed and very nervous. But I go back to what I have stated in the beginning, that the case may belong to any one of categories (*a*), (*b*), (*c*), (*d*), (*e*), or any combination of (*b*), (*d*), and (*e*).

I have examined the tray which is made of compressed rushes. It is fourteen inches in diameter, and when thrown on the floor does not oscillate.

There is a further matter in connection with this house which is interesting and details of which I append, though the two cases may have nothing to do with each other. In answer to my enquiries, Ronnie told me this:

[1] Actually he left in less than a month after these events.

The only other supernatural experience I have had is this, and I have had it scores of times. I used often to work in the study from midnight till six in the morning, everybody else in the house being asleep. I would hear footsteps approach the study door and after a few seconds recede. On one or two occasions I have got to the door and opened it before the footsteps receded, but I have never seen or felt or been in any way conscious of anybody or anything. When I have closed the door and returned to my study the footsteps have always receded. But when I have left the door open I have heard no more footsteps. When I have not opened the door until after the receding, I have never seen or felt or been conscious of anything or anybody. I do not think I have ever opened the door while they were approaching or receding. This experience frequently happened during the three years before we employed Frank. I have not, during the last five months, worked late at night. Our bedroom opens on to the passage leading to the study down which the footsteps come, and there is no reason why I should not hear them in the bedroom, as I frequently lie awake reading. I have never heard them. But I have frequently heard quite different and more agitated footsteps in the room overhead occupied by my niece aged four. I have heard them between midnight and two o'clock when my sisters go to bed in the room with my niece, and again later on when I believed my sisters to be asleep. One of my sisters is lame, and I know the other's footsteps with or without shoes. When they go into the room or go to bed they move very quietly so as not to awaken baby, whereas the footsteps I hear are loud. Neither of my sisters has ever heard footsteps in the bedroom. Kenneth and I do not pretend to be psychic, and we are not nervous. I have never roused him to listen to these footsteps as he works very hard, is a very sound sleeper, and to wake him upsets him. Kenneth has never heard the footsteps.

Well, that's the story which has occupied my mind over the entire week-end. There now remain the questions of probability and credence which are bound up together. I think I can safely say this, that my mind is not prepared to believe *any* human testimony with the same firmness with which it rejects the notion that inanimate objects can move

about of their own volition. Volition, of course, is only a loose word for saying that such objects are temporary instruments for the manifestation of forces insufficiently explored.

I told the entire story to Fred Leigh who said: "Reminds me of a war hospital at Bournemouth. Six of us slept in a room in which a lady-barber had been murdered playing a harp!"

March 18 *Wednesday.* Jolly lunch at the Savoy yesterday with Harry Preston. Milsom Rees, the throat man, was there and very affable, instructive and gay: "Melba and Madame X—— were both excessively jealous women, but with this difference. Melba would pursue a man she hated with her tongue; X—— would follow him to the end of the earth to stab him. X—— once consulted me, but not about her vocal chords; the trouble was a boil on her bottom."

Paid a second visit to *Red Night* and again very much impressed. Hodson's play may not be as good as Sherriff's but I feel that it all happens in the next dug-out to Stanhope's.

March 19 *Thursday.* In the matter of credibility and ghost stories consider this.

Selwyn Jepson told me at lunch that this morning he dislocated his elbow, and finding himself outside a hospital went in. Seeing one door marked "Casualties" and another marked "Porter," and disliking the notion of being a casualty, he went through the other door, found a porter, and as his elbow is always coming out told him how to put it back, which the porter did. Now would not anybody who had seen Selwyn go in and come out *assume without question* that, if treated at all, it had been in the casualty ward? And would not this be accepted in a court of justice? In my view *nothing* in psychic matters can be taken for granted. A man may go into a restaurant, order a plate of meat and potatoes, remain long enough to consume the meal, leave an empty plate and pay in the usual way. It does not follow that he has dined, though nobody would question it. He *may* have shoved the lot in his pocket. In psychic investigations everything must be proved. If a man swears a door was locked or a gas-jet

lit the investigator must satisfy himself that the door does, in fact, lock, and that the gas-jet now lights and that the supply of gas was not cut off at the time.

Looking through Jock's correspondence to-day I find he has sent off this letter, furiously dictated by me through the bathroom door:

DEAR MADAM,

No! Mr. Agate will *not* autograph your book. He is messing with psychic phenomena, and has no time to bother with paper and string.

Yours faithfully
SECRETARY.

Caddish, but I must let go sometime.

To-day's good story. James Bone, who weeps at the smallest lump of Portland stone and is an Old Londoner *à outrance*, said to Moray McLaren the other day: "Let's go and have a last look at the Adelphi." Seeing an old Cockney lounger he asked him in a voice strangled with emotion whether he realised that the Terrace was coming down. "Yus," said the old man. "And abaht time too. It's a bleedin' eyesore!"

The Daily Telegraph is taking a hand in my favourite game of numerals. It prints Sydney Carroll as saying that something or other is "a 50–50 partnership." I suppose we shall presently be reading:

When 40 winters shall besiege thy brow

followed by:

The heartache, and the 1,000 natural shocks
That flesh is heir to.

Now for some legitimate use of figures. Have bought one of the new 21 h.p. Hillman Hawks at £320, getting an allowance of £165 on the Humber.

March 20 *Friday.* Letter from Harold Dearden:

*Berkeley Square, W.*1.
March 19, 36.

MY DEAR JAMES,

Many thanks for your letter and enclosure, upon which I would like to make the following observations:

1. The boy Frank sounds like an hysteric: an engaging type

of person whose evidence must be regarded as wholly unreliable.

2. "It is a million to one," you say, "against an educated person telling a lie." By no means, James; though your simple faith in humanity touches me. It is an even bet that such an one will tell a lie if (*a*), he is an hysteric or (*b*), possessed of the artistic temperament. Even the most humdrum people are not averse to insinuating themselves, by means of a bit of embroidery of the truth, into a staggering drama which does no harm to anyone. It is regarded as no more of a lie to do so than to embroider a scrap of dialogue heard in the bus in such a way as shall convert it into an amusing story. Life being what it is, could anything be more natural and excusable?

3. Ronnie's story of the mysterious footsteps, taken in conjunction with the fact that he is a creative artist and that Frank is manifestly of an hysterical type at least, appears to me to contain the explanation of the whole story of the tray's behaviour. Read the story of Bettine Gisburn in my book *Devilish But True*. The first nurse I put in charge of her began after a few days to collaborate with her patient! Does that suggest anything to your trusting soul?

In other words, one explanation of this affair is as follows:

The story, which opens with the self-delusion of Frank, is made into a perfect drama by Ronnie, who cannot resist the temptation to say that he saw the tray first on the floor and then on the dresser, nobody having entered the kitchen in the meantime.

You have suggested the possible combination of unconscious lying by Frank, plus the hoax by Kenneth.

I suggest self-dramatisation by Frank, artistically completed by Ronnie.

To recapitulate:

Frank self-persuades himself that the tray has moved back from the floor to the dresser just as he has persuaded himself of its other movements. Ronnie, who up to this point has told Frank not to be a fool, now sees what a good story it will be if he provides the one detail of corroboration necessary. This is exceedingly common behaviour, even among the "very best people" including Bishops. Indeed, I should imagine that Bishops, as a class, are prone to this sort of intellectual gymnastics. Perhaps necessarily

so. At any rate I have seen countless examples of this sort of thing in the course of my practice. You do not surprise me when you tell me of Frank's subsequent nervousness. It would not surprise me if you said that he was still off his food and going about the house white and jibbering. I should expect it.

Now let me tell you a little story.

The other night I was at a party given by E. V. Lucas, who promised us a swell conjuror. He was better than his word. The conjuror began by producing from his pocket a sealed envelope which he placed on the mantelpiece. He borrowed a penny from one of the guests whose name I forget, tossed up three times and asked us to remember the sequence, which was "heads, heads, tails." Louis Greig was then given his choice of a number of counters of different colours; he chose a green one. I was next handed a pack of cards from which I was asked to choose four cards. I did so. As I held the cards there was no possibility of "forcing." Teddy Gwenn was next asked whether, if offered a drink, he would prefer champagne, milk, sherry, or beer. He said, somewhat suprisingly, "milk." The conjuror then asked Harry Graham to open the envelope on the mantelpiece. He did so, and drew from it a piece of paper on which was *typewritten* the whole sequence of choices which I have related, in their correct order and in perfect detail. I have now told you what I observed; but of course, *not what happened*; which is the whole point.

So stop being a B.F., my dear James, and get back to your dramatic criticism, which on Sunday last, I thought a bit thin. I now know this to have been the result of your ghostly preoccupation.

Yours ever,

HAROLD DEARDEN.

And now comes this from my fair anonymity:

March 19, 1936.

MISTER AYE-GATE, SIR,

The Scots are a literal lot. They will suppose you said in your broadcast that all Frasers are illegitimate. I think it possible that all Scots are illegitimate, Scotsmen being so mean and Scotswomen so generous.

Isn't St. Andrews paradise? When I am dead and don't

care whether east winds blow or stand still, my ghost will walk South (or is it North) Street, if it walks at all. I would contrive to live there if the Scots could talk English. It is all very well on holiday to hang about in the chemist's for an English voice and then follow it until it speaks again, but for ever and ever . . .?

The other day you wrote a wrong write (skewers me). " No man that is not a Shakespeare . . ." *A* Shakespeare! One here, one there and another in Tunbridge Wells?

Wot a time we've a-had. Jean Forbes-Robertson on one stage, W. H. Auden & Co.'s sparklers on another and the Chinese Exhibition last week. Wasn't it nice of them to give some of that shelf of honour to Eumorfopulous? I came out of that place feeling like a cow in a field, and the people in Piccadilly looked like cows too. Piccadilly people, mark! Bowler brims curled to the last millimetre! As for Jean Forbes-Robertson, I would die for her. And I would not cross the road to meet all Hollywood if it were standing there waiting in a queue. Clark Gable as Parnell! Isn't it funny, at least it would be if they were not going to spend a million dollars on it. A head's beautiful in exact ratio (is that the right word) to the intelligence within, argal most film heroes are very very ugly, and some old men quite beautiful, I mean really old, Prof. Gilbert Murray for one.

This seems to be the end of this street. Good afternoon, dear Sir. Yors trooly.

I should like to thank my correspondent for these charming missives, but alas she—for of course it is a she—insists on remaining in ambush. May the sniping continue.

March 21 *Saturday.* Jack Hassall is a genius at paring a story to the bone. At supper last night somebody said " Tell us a story, Jack." He replied, " I heard one yesterday which may amuse you: The fellow went back and said . . ."

Fred Leigh is constantly springing surprises. He told me at 2 a.m. this morning that on King Edward the Seventh's Coronation Day he blew the General's salute for General Buller on the right of Wellington's monument at Aldershot.

He was 14 years old and had joined the Staffordshire Volunteers at the age of 12, when he could already blow every Infantry Call in the British Army. He spent the evening with Frank Mullings outside the Officers' Mess listening to Arthur Aldridge, a fine tenor, who was killed in a motor accident in Australia about two years ago. Fred turned to Frank Mullings and said " I wish I could sing like that." Mullings replied " So do I ! "

The parson from the little church at Horsham where my rude forefathers sleep called on me to-day. He brought with him the first of the church's Minute Books. The congregation, consisting principally of Agates, Dendys, Eversheds—my second name is Evershed and lots of my cousins are Dendys—Caffyns and Potters, seem to have been occupied almost entirely with backsliding. The book has dozens of entries like these:

> At a Church Meeting held at Horsham on Wednesday July 24: 1734.
>
> 1. The Case of Bro: Thomas Sturt being long under Debate, and almost concluded for him to have his Place in the Church walking orderly for the future, the aggrieved Friends having declar'd their Willingness to pass by former Things: But some Admonition being given to him and he pointed at as having been a Dishonour to Religion, he took it so in disgust that he not only went away angry, but having taken Horse and rode some Distance came back again to tell us he was angry, and would become a publick Man, & not be a dishonour to our Church any more.
>
> Dec. 17, 1760.
>
> Agreed that Tho: Buckman of Wivelsfield be Talked to by Bro: Tho: Walder & Stephen Agate to find out the Truth of some Scandalous Reports now Existing Concerning Him.

There is one entry in which Thomas and Ann Agate are both hauled over the coals for fornication. Ann subsequently returned to the fold, but not Thomas. The parson is a cheerful bloke who wants to be a dramatic critic, and with this object has " embarked on a *pied-à-terre* " in London.

In the evening attended the last of the Savage Club Dinners

in Adelphi Terrace, after which the Club closed down to re-open in a fortnight at No. 1 Carlton House Terrace, Curzon's old place. The first contribution to the new Suggestion Book was Reggie Arkell's " I was glad when they said unto me ' Let us go into the house of a lord.' " There was a lot of larking and schoolboy nonsense, including a mock auction of things we don't want to take with us. Lot 1. The remains of the Cold Buffet including a veal and ham pie repainted and glazed in 1933. Lot 2. A miniature Japanese fan for many years the sole ventilating apparatus of Adelphi Terrace. A mackintosh moustache guard formerly the property of a defunct member. A non-risqué story by George Graves. Afterwards we got more serious, Joe Batten putting on a number of gramophone records of old-time Savages: Albert Chevalier, Gus Elen, Santley, Robert Radford, Odell, Lord Roberts, Jellicoe, Alfred Lester, and many more, including Norman O'Neill's music to *Mary Rose.*

March 22 *Sunday.* Tried out the new Hillman Hawk which went like a bird, or rather, like a bird which is being run in. Slept all the way to Brighton and nine-tenths of the way home. Sitting on the verge of Beachy Head and watching the sea-gulls I asked George Mathew what, if he were not a human being, he would like to be. He said without hesitation " a worm." This reminds me that some time ago when I asked him which of the human virtues he rated most highly he answered " Servility, closely followed by Obsequiousness." This was in some restaurant where a super-majestic major-domo had cringingly suggested a wine. But there was no excuse for to-day's " worm " except George's consistency, which is remarkable. He is always telling me old stories which I have never heard. To-day's was about the little Jew boy who said to his parent: " Father, where do the Christians get all the money we take from them ? "

March 24 *Tuesday.* A book is to be published on Monday next whose author, E. E. Kellett, recalls an old lady who in 1884 said to somebody: " I am astonished you

cannot make up your mind about Oliver Cromwell. My dear husband's first wife's first husband knew him well and liked him much." This is just possible.

These things are always extraordinary, even if they are only like that minor one which has just cropped up in my family. My father, if he were still alive, would be 102 this year. Yet my Horsham parson sends me a photograph of my *grandfather's* partner taken in 1914. "James Brent Price, whose photograph shows him at the age of eighty-eight, died at an advanced age some few years ago. He was extremely proud of the fact that he had enabled George Meredith's biographers to unearth details of the latter's boyhood in Portsmouth, where J. B. P. lived next door to G. M."

March 25 Wednesday. Hearing that Korda is to produce a film of *Hamlet* for Robert Donat I remarked that my blessings would go with the venture on condition that the First Sailor, let alone the Second, speaks no more words than are set down for him. Somebody at once said, of course, that there are no sailors in *Hamlet.* To which I replied that in *Hamlet* there are no sailors that matter.

There is an unimportant First Sailor who delivers to Horatio the letter in which Hamlet explains how it is that, having been dispatched to England, he is returned to Denmark:

> Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them; on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy; but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them.

I hope to goodness Korda is not going to show Donat taking command of the ship over the head of a pusillanimous Captain, climbing the rigging, spying out the enemy, compelling valour, boarding the pirate, and bargaining with him for his freedom. A long experience of the films has taught me that if a thing can be done wrong, it will. Almost

the most important thing in that great epic of the sea known as the Mutiny of the Bounty was Captain Bligh's voyage in the long boat, and presumably that was why in the film it was reduced to something well under five minutes. Quite the least important thing in *Hamlet* is the sea encounter which I confidently expect to see occupying a full half-hour of the film. Now Shakespeare was no fool. A shipwreck being essential to *The Tempest* he showed us one, and we cannot doubt that if the pirate incident had been essential to *Hamlet* he would have shown us it. He didn't, and that's the end of the matter. Or should be.

This is the point at which we have to meet the statement put forward on behalf of the screen that in representing Shakespeare its function is to show the things which Shakespeare couldn't. I deny this *ab initio* and *in toto*! There is almost nothing from Macbeth's blasted heath via the storm in *Lear* to Owen Glendower's ghostly music which Shakespeare could not represent, or funked representing when he wanted. The object of screening Shakespeare is so to present the play in the new medium that it leaves the film-goer with the old impression. In the beginning mistakes were, of course, to be expected, and we now realise that it was because the gauze mills of America worked overtime that Shakespeare's fairy play was turned into a midsummer nightmare.

Up to now these errors have persisted, and I am sick of reading long accounts of how in the shooting of *As You Like It* Miss Bergner has sat for hours on the edge of a pool, mum, but expressively watching gentlemen in waders prodding waterfowl into activity. (Ivor Novello wittily asks whether a better title might not turn out to be " Elisabeth and her German Arden "?) But Korda must not play ducks and drakes with tragedy. It might be necessary in *Macbeth* to show that battlefield in which the Norwegian foe had dismayed Macbeth and Banquo " as sparrows, eagles, or the hare the lion." We know that Banquo is to prove a gentleman on whom Duncan can build an absolute trust, and all along we suspect the contrary of Macbeth. But Duncan has his famous " There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face!" In other words,

fair may be foul and foul fair. This contradiction between aspect and character is the very essence of the play, and it is quite possible that a preliminary battle-scene may be necessary to establish this. Similarly in *Othello* it may be necessary to show the battles, sieges, fortunes, the moving accidents by flood and field, the men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders—in short, all those traveller's tales to which Desdemona did " seriously incline." These things are, indeed, essential to the play, for it is by them that Othello's valour is established. It is his deeds and not his looks which win Desdemona's heart and so dispose of the colour difficulty. Othello says the first and implies the second. But there is no suggestion anywhere in Hamlet that his seamanship and capacities as an all-in wrestler and subsequently as a bargainer are significant. Indeed to dwell on these things, which contradict Hamlet's first characteristic which is vacillation, would have done infinite harm to the play. And this is the reason why Shakespeare disposes of them in a letter. On the other hand, it may be legitimate to show Ophelia drowning in the glassy stream, because death by drowning comes within the category of those things which the stage of Shakespeare's day, or even of any day, cannot show. I think it likely that if Shakespeare could have shown this he would, and this is the cinema's one justification. And for innumerable reasons there *must* be lots and lots of Fortinbras, whose drums ought to sound during the " How all occasions " soliloquy.

March 26 *Thursday.* Gave a well-known physicist a brief summary of my Poltergeist stuff to-day, and his view, between two glasses of sherry, was this: " My dear James, Poltergeists aren't my subject. But from what you have told me I should say your case runs so true to known form as to be a standard example. It's exactly the kind of thing you find in all the textbooks, and I doubt if it would be worth putting in your Diary except that it came more or less under your observation. The boy is, of course, responsible. I don't mean that he threw the tray about, but that without him it would never have moved. The boy is the equivalent of

what in physics we call a catalyser. A catalyser is a substance whose presence is necessary if a chemical reaction is to take place, but which is not used up in the reaction. The presence is necessary, but it does not enter into the initial or final products of the reaction. It acts as a board to the coupling. If the boy leaves, nothing more will happen. I should be prepared to believe your friends' evidence implicitly, and also that the boy is very nervous after the event. He seems to be exactly the kind of person whose presence is essential to these phenomena which have no physical explanation. They seem to be in the nature of a tiny corner in which physics, as we know them, have come unstuck. Almost as though physics were dreaming."

J. A. It's a good job physics come unstuck among the milk jugs and not in the Milky Way.

THE PROFESSOR. So far as our information goes, James, there are no persons approaching puberty knocking about Outer Space.

We left it at that.

March 27 Friday. Motored Benno down to Maidenhead where he has taken a furnished house, and was giving a recital. He turned to me suddenly and said: "Do you believe in spiritualism?" I said "No." B. went on: "Neither did I, until a year or two ago when I was staying in a country house with some non-musical people. They were very keen on table-rapping, with which three of them used to amuse themselves while I played piquet with my host. The amazing thing was that the table insisted on rapping out L-I-S-Z-T. It *always* did it, and went on doing it over and over again. One evening the table ran away and they had to follow it. It ran across the room to the piano and began knocking in the rhythm of the Polonaise in E that I am going to play to-night, *including the trill*. My friends couldn't have done this unless they had held the table in their fists, which they didn't. Their hands were on the top, and so far as I know none of them knew the Polonaise. I certainly had never played it in that house."

A lovely if popular recital—Beethoven, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Liszt, including a brilliant arrangement of Schumann's " Frühlingsnacht." Followed by a lovely and equally popular supper—pickled herrings, cream soup, roast duck. After supper Moiseiwitsch in his dressing-gown and the firelight looked exactly like Byron. The other guest was the music governess to the little Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose—a thumping good sort who firmly refused to tell tales out of the royal kindergarten. We sat round the fire listening to Horowitz playing Rachmaninoff's Third Concerto on a tinpot little gramophone that had been left in the house. The evening's most exquisite thing was not the recital and not the supper, but Benno's five-year-old son. Before we left for the Town Hall this young man, a Briton born of a Russian father and a French mother, recited a German poem to me in a Japanese kimono. I hope Barrie never sees Boris playing with his father or he will make a play out of it, and I know for what actress !

March 28 *Saturday.* Am tired of having my gramophone at Thorpe Bay, and only the wireless with its filthy dance-music at Belsize Park. So to-day sent the piano back and bought a Halcyon radio-gramophone. Afterwards took Bertie van Thal and George Mathew to lunch at the Sports Club, where Savages are temporary guests. Which six composers would we take with us to a desert island ?

Mine were:

RICHARD STRAUSS
SULLIVAN
BEETHOVEN
BERLIOZ
CHOPIN
WAGNER

Van T. wanted:

MOZART
BEETHOVEN
BRAHMS
ROSSINI
SCHUBERT
VERDI

George chose:

BEETHOVEN
LISZT
CHOPIN
TSCHAIKOWSKY
VERDI
SCHUMANN

We wrote our lists out first and made comparisons afterwards. No Bach, Handel, Haydn, Gluck, Weber, Sibelius, Elgar, Delius in any of them. George was adamant about Wagner: "Nobody with a quick brain and an impatient mind can possibly sit through those filthy operas. When he gets to the point he's magnificent, but he takes too long getting there. All those long, frowsty, suburban rigmaroles! Gods and goddesses should take a little thing like incest in their stride!" There's a good deal to be said for George's point of view. The last Wagner I heard at Covent Garden was the last act of *The Valkyrie*. Peter Page took me and was horribly shocked when I said the old gentleman in the night-gown wanted drastic cutting, and that a competent composer would have made him say in ten minutes all that matters musically. I cannot understand people like Ernest Newman who bother about the idiotic plot of *The Ring*. I should like to see *all* the plot cut out, and the four operas run into one and got through in two hours and three-quarters. What Fafner said to the Erd-Mutter is not my idea of evidence. This candid confession probably puts me beyond the musical pale. I don't mind. I begin to doubt whether I am inside any pale that matters.

March 29 *Sunday.* While shaving this morning at Harrison's Hotel, Brighton, composed this:

To a Graver of Epitaphs

Close the dim hearse,
Carve the grey verse,
And, since he grew not old,
Make the full-stop of gold.

If this were a newly-discovered fragment of Emily Dickinson all the little boys of the *New Statesman* would meet in Red Lion Square and light a bonfire!

The season for Nonsense about Hamlet makes a fine start in to-day's *Observer*. " The play, of course, is full of Freudian complexes, and Miles Malleson has soaked himself in them; but although they are implicit in his script I shall not interpret them consciously." It is Robert Donat speaking. I also read that there is to be *no* Fortinbras and *no* sound of drumming !

The reason George Mathew doesn't let his right hand know what his left is doing is that he still isn't clear which is which. Last night as I was a bit nervy he insisted on taking me to a film called *Get Off My Foot*. When we got there Mrs. Patrick Campbell was complaining about the number of knots in a small parcel and a nasty young man was standing over her with a poker. Result—*Crime and Punishment*. Very bright.

March 30 *Monday.* Supped at the Savoy with Peter Page. Here is his list of six composers:

BACH
HANDEL
WAGNER
BRAHMS
STRAUSS (R.)
DEBUSSY

April 1 *Wednesday.* We are now " in " at No. 1 Carlton House Terrace. I don't know what other Savages think, but I feel like a *débutante* with a hole in her stocking.

April 2 *Thursday.* Letter from Vernon Woodhouse, desperately ill in a nursing-home:

Knaresborough Place,
S.W.5.
2.iv.36.

MY DEAR JAMES,

Greetings ! I hear you met my missus last night at the Saville Theatre and enquired after me. Thank you. Well, my theatre-going and office days are over, so I'm afraid we shall never again be able to pass the time of night together. Still, I shall have my memories ! Duse and Bernhardt, Irving and Hare, Ellen Terry and Mrs. Patrick Campbell in her prime, Jimmy Welch in *Mr. Hopkinson*, the first

night of *The Gay Lord Quex* and lots and lots of other plays and players. How much more vivid they are than some of the modern stuff !

And even if I *am* bedridden I shall have my weekly *Sunday Times* and, on occasions, its dramatic critic lamenting the fact that a column has to be written about a play worth precisely six lines. I often wonder whether what I told you about G. B. S's contract with the *Saturday Review*, when he was paid whether he wrote a line or not, has not stuck in your memory and filled you with envy !

Perhaps my greatest regret at saying Good-bye to the theatre will be that I shall never see the Bergner attempting a part not specially written for her !

My missus is taking over my *Bystander* criticisms, and I hope to God she won't feel as bored as I sometimes used to do ! All the same, I wish . . . I wish . . .

Yours always
VERNON WOODHOUSE.

April 3 *Friday.* Benno's list in the composer game, which he scribbled on the back of an envelope at the Savage last night just before leaving for South Africa:

BEETHOVEN
BRAHMS
SCHUMANN
CHOPIN
WAGNER
AD-LIB—(MODERNS)

He added : " Wagner is under protest, and I really think I should put Schumann first."

April 4 *Saturday.* Birmingham. The horses in magnificent fettle. In the evening sent Albert Throup and Fred to a Wallace Beery film, and myself spent an innocent evening, solus, at the Markova-Dolin ballet, which I found on tour here. Well-meaning.

April 6 *Monday.* It is not given to every writer to have his Autobiography favourably noticed in *The Shields Magpie or Monthly Record of News and Views for*

South-East Northumberland: "I am not a book-reviewer, I am just a chatter-box, but I do like his most agreeable prose." Bravo, Magpie! *But why does nobody buy my cheap edition?*

April 7 Tuesday. Have tried my composer game on half-a-dozen people. Leo Pavia replied on a postcard:

BEETHOVEN
SCHUBERT
DELIUS
ELGAR
BRUCKNER
JOHANN STRAUSS

Neville Cardus writes:

"*The Manchester Guardian*,"
Manchester.
April 6, 1936.

MY DEAR AGATE,

These are the six composers who would satisfy, as much as any other six, my personal "likes." It doesn't mean that they are each in my opinion amongst the very greatest. Bach was probably the biggest or best organised brain of the lot—Palestrina was more original, more intense and poetic than Brahms—who appeals simply to the *gemütlich* part of me. I give some reasons:

MOZART. The perfect artist, opera or instrumental forms.

BEETHOVEN. The honest, simple yet subtle man, didactic maybe, but with his fine rebelliousness and ample humours.

WAGNER. The moulder of musical shapes that are also dramatic. The great romantic in *Tristan*; and the great humanist in *Meistersinger*.

SCHUBERT. The perfect singer of songs.

The VERDI of *Falstaff*—I mean exactly that; I don't want the Verdi of any of the other operas. But the wit and musical invention of *Falstaff must* be in my mind at some period every day of my life.

BRAHMS. The good all-round composer for all everyday moods.

Yours ever
N. C.

That wily old trout, Ernest Newman, refused the fly altogether. My question " doesn't admit of a plain and simple answer, because there's really, for a musician, no meaning in the question itself. It leaves out of consideration the matter of *memory*. Personally I should not turn a hair if I were told that I would never again be allowed to hear a single one of the great works of the great composers, because I could get on quite happily with my memories of them: I could defy the ban, and give myself a concert or an opera any time I liked."

And so on and so forth. I ought to have put the question another way, and asked E. N. which six composers, and which six only, he would give a child as music-companions for life. Even then this most distrustful of critical fish would have found some snag to coil himself round. He just won't play. I like people who are not afraid of making fools of themselves. I like that other eminent critic who said: " Give me Moussorgsky and Schubert, and you can keep the rest. But leave my name out of it."

Mark Hambourg's contribution:

*London, N.W.*1.
April 6th. 1936.

DEAR JIMMY,

Forgive me for typing my answer but my hand is so illegible that I am doing it as much for your sake as mine.

As regards your symposium and the question you ask me to answer; having devoted all my life as a musician to the piano I must needs give my answer as a pianist, which must make my choice rather obvious and restricted.

For what pianist could live without the music of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt ? My other two selections are a little more personal, one being Schubert, and the other Debussy.

I have always found Debussy to be the most original and imaginative composer since Liszt, an innovator and creator of new sound patterns and combinations for the piano just as well as in orchestral music.

Yours ever,
MARK HAMBOURG.

Jock, looking through my lists, says they are all too

gesucht: "They ought to be the first names to come to mind." Challenged, he immediately produces the following:

GALUPPI
DIBDIN
FLOTOW
HENRY VIII
BACH
CLARIBEL

April 8 *Wednesday.* This game is getting hold of me. Here's another form of it. What six dishes would you choose if you must never throughout the rest of your life eat any others ? And one drink. My choice:

Ham and eggs
Fried sole
Cold roast beef and jacket potatoes
Hot roast lamb, green peas and mint sauce
Rice pudding and baked apples
Gorgonzola cheese and celery
Tea

Victor MacClure wanted:

Calf's head and cabbage
Grilled entrecôte and spinach
Bacon and eggs and salad
Grilled sole with brown bread
" My " lobscouse
Curried chicken and rice (" my way ")
Claret

George Mathew:

Escalope de veau milanaise
Curried lamb
Sole bonne femme
Omelette aux rognons
Cold roast beef and salad
Eggs and bacon
Burgundy (red)

But it is Ernest Fenton who, like Mr. Dick, sets us all right with his perfectly simple:

Bread and milk
Grilled herrings
Bacon and eggs
Boiled mutton
Prunes and rice
Bread and cheese and celery
Water

The plumber being in the house, I tried it on him. He replied instantly: "A bit of each, guv'nor, and tons of wallop!"

Jock, reeking of *The Happy Hypocrite*, just produced at His Majesty's, professes to want no more than:

Brown bread
Honey
Apricocks
Little strawberries
Dewberry wine
—— and bread.

April 11 *Saturday.* Thorpe Bay for week-end. Snow. Walk from Golf Club to bungalow, less than half-a-mile, with half-a-dozen stops to recover breath. Meditate on:

> Hopeless and helpless doth Ægeon wend,
> But to procrastinate his lifeless end.

Substitute Agathon for Ægeon and there you are! More snow. Sit in Thorpe Bay station awaiting arrival of George. *Empty* train draws in. Sleet. Continue sitting. No further trains. Reflect, like Balzac on the garret without a nail, on the absence of so much as a goods engine *pour faciliter le suicide*. Discover that a champagne which I have bought wholesale at 7/8 a bottle is worth exactly seven shillings and eightpence. Lose at rummy. No need to put the fire out as the hailstones are doing it. Bed.

April 12 *Sunday.* Lunch with Peter Page at Colville Hall—the sort of place where, according to Noel Arnott, they say to you: "Be careful with that door-handle. Henry the Eighth wrenched it off the last time he dined here." Peter

is the only journalist who has the low-down on things without the low-down mind.

In the afternoon played a round of golf with Winsor, now professional at Burnham-on-Crouch. Asthma is entirely inexplicable, since to-day I scampered up and down this course like a young goat. Played two shots like the master I steadfastly hold myself to be, seventy indifferent ones, and some dozen rank bad 'uns. Winsor holed his mashie shot at the first hole, and I holed mine at the last, so the *pattern* at least was a good one.

Was awakened by a blackbird outside my window about five o'clock this morning. Malibran at her best cannot have been more brilliant.

April 13 *Easter Monday.* Worked all day. Foul weather out-of-doors and not much better indoors. The wireless rhymes " soil " with " loyal."

> To native soil
> Be ever loyal!

Obscene!

April 14 *Tuesday.* Lovely spring day. Motored to Burnham and playing my second to the third green had the sudden conviction I should die before lunch. This lasted for nine holes during which I pulled out some of my old golf, probably due to not thinking about the game. Cured the nerve-storm—which I suppose it was—by pretending to hear my doctor say: " Nonsense, James. People don't die before lunch. They have lunch first and die afterwards." Back to London in the afternoon and ordered three new suits for the shows. Much exercised as to the right hatter to build my new grey bowler.

April 15 *Wednesday.* The English are an extraordinary race. They borrow ten million pounds' worth of China's art treasures, bring them over in a warship, and when they've had their fun with them bung them back in a liner which goes aground! Why not send them back in a

warship, which is better built, safer from fire, carries no passengers whose manias and vagaries are an unknown quantity, and can keep a straight course in deep water? Yet I don't suppose anybody will make a fuss about this.

Lunched with Gonzalez Byass and Co., the sherry people, in their cellars in St. Thomas Street, near London Bridge. Sherry (two sorts), champagne (two brands), claret, port and Spanish brandy. Maurice Healy told a lovely story about an Irish boy tried for seducing a colleen under age. The boy had written to her: "Far away from me now there's a little gap in the hills, and beyond is the sea; and it's there I do be gazin' the whole day long, for it's the nearest thing to yourself that I can be lookin' at." Pure Synge. The judge let the boy off, found the money for the marriage, and started them in a little shop.

Spent the afternoon writing suspiciously lucid article. *Carmen* at Sadler's Wells in the evening. Busman's holiday. Poorish Don José, unbewitching Carmen, Micaela of Brünnhilde-like proportions, good Escamillo. Crowded house, people standing everywhere. On the stairs met eminent legal light who said: "You don't recognise me out of my forensic clobber. Sup with me at my club." I had forgotten how tight this old boy gets round about one o'clock. But with what delicious quality of tightness! Pure Pickwick. Round about two he begins to bellow, making more noise than Captain Boythorn and the Bull of Basan put together. "Where do you keep your wife?" he dropped his voice to ask. I said I hadn't one to keep. He whispered: "I keep mine so far off that if she goes a yard further she'll be coming back." I asked where this advantageous spot might be, and he roared: "New Hebrides. I tried South Africa, but it didn't wash." Asked how he had persuaded the lady to remove herself all that way, he said slowly: "It was very difficult." X—— has seen as many men condemned to death as most of his order; he warned me against pity for the murderer, and talked a lot about false sentiment. He agreed that every murderer holds himself to be an exception and apart from murderers as a class. Home about three and slept like a top.

April 16 Letter from Lionel Fielden:
Thursday.

Controller of Broadcasting.
New Delhi,
7th April, 1936.

MOST WITTY AND EGOTISTIC,

It was charming to have an Epistle of St. Agate to the Anglo-Indians, even though it only boiled down to a demand for assent to your publication of my sillier indiscretions.

India is a complete puzzle. I never could understand politics, and I'm a very bad observer, so I shall never have any opinion about this country, except that what is really wrong with it is simply bad taste. Whether good taste died with the Moghuls, or whether it has simply been killed by a few generations of rulers from the aspidistra forests of Surbiton and Clapham, I don't know; but I'm quite sure that life can't be pleasant in a country where sheer bad taste is universal and triumphant. One has only to glance once at the superb lines of the Old Fort and Mosque in Delhi, and then at the sprawling Lutyens-Baker asylums of New Delhi, to know that the English won't even leave good ruins in India. And the bungalows of New Delhi, this twenty million pound city which couldn't even be up to date ! Classed A, B, and C—and you *must* live in the class which goes with your rank and pay—they are a monotonous succession of little white pill-boxes, mostly without a proper water-system, and even without plugs; with square flat gardens measured out to suit the rank of the occupier, and " arranged " by the Public Works Department; inside small square rooms, mostly Government-furnished, and little effort on the part of anyone to make them habitable. People say " Oh, but we're only here for fifteen years so it isn't worth bothering ! " Hardly a book to be seen in any of them, and not even an Amateur Dramatic Club, let alone a theatre, in Delhi; everyone goes on Saturday night —but mark you, *only* on Saturday night—to the cinema; the only thing which really put them off this, and made an empty house one Saturday, was Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream.* A man behind me, coming in late after the film had started, said in a loud voice " This is only a trailer." His wife said " No, dear, I think this is it." " H'm," he said after a minute, in a disgusted voice, " it does sound

like Shakespeare." (I didn't think it did, very much, myself!) I'm bound to say that everyone is horribly overworked, and that is some excuse (though not for the memsahibs who mostly play bridge, gossip, and don't even bother to learn the language in their deserts of leisure). The Government of India is built on the principle that you can't trust anybody, so that everything is checked and re-checked by armies of half-educated Indian clerks, so that " he died of miles and miles of piles of files " is a mere platitude, and the system gets more and more hopelessly clogged as more and more clerks introduce more and more brothers, sons and cousins, and write industriously—no matter what—on every file in order to justify their existence. On the whole, New Delhi seems to me quite a good example of what any system of communism might be expected to become. There are, of course, other things in India; temples and elephants and, I dare say, nice people; but it's very difficult for any over-worked official to get the time or opportunity of seeing them. Indians, that is, the intelligentsia, are extremely suspicious of all officials, and I don't wonder; in any case, the two mentalities are so different that it seems to me hopeless to expect them to meet. East *is* East, etc. When I go and sit on a mat and talk to Mr. Gandhi, or any member of Congress, the burden of the officials' song of mild reproof to me is " You're not *wise* to mix with these fellows—*they'll let you down.*" And the Indian feels much the same towards us. It isn't really a question of " letting down "; it's a matter of absolutely different values, standards, and mental processes. Personally I don't feel I've got near seeing the inside of any one Indian's mind since I came out here. Enough. Isn't it *frightful* to think that I shall bore you all with this kind of conversation when I get back? Shall I ever get back? I doubt it. Either I shall wither away with one of the strange diseases which this country hands out so plentifully (we think nothing of plague, smallpox, and leprosy), or I shall start to wander

> the ever-silent spaces of the East
> far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

I don't want to come back to England, because I hate its climate, and I hate its over-population, and the number of cars on the road, and the pale people going to office by the

8.30—and yet . . . how difficult it is . . . I miss my friends, and intelligent conversation, and books and plays, and nowhere else can I have those things. Will you come out and stay with me ? I have made myself a quite good house, with very up-to-date bathrooms, and the climate and flowers of Delhi in winter are something you can't beat anywhere in the world. We have had six full months of cloudless skies, July temperature by day, and mild October temperature at night; and now all the flowering trees are making an incredible show, groves of jacarandas glowing blue, and trees as big as elms, whose name I can never remember, covered with huge scarlet flowers, and frangipani and oleander intoxicating the air. And at Agra you'd see one of the loveliest groups of buildings in the world—not so much the Taj, lovely as it is, but the fairylike palaces of Jehangir, and Shah Jehan, and Akhbar, and Akhbar's exquisite tomb at Sikandra, and his deserted city of Fathepur-Sikri; they're worth coming to see. Still, what's the use of talking: you'd certainly never come. But I'd give quite a lot of my salary for an evening of your company and conversation. This letter deserves an answer, but won't, I am quite well aware, get one. Salaam, Huzzor, I must to tiffin with a memsahib.

Respectfully and distantly yours,

LIONEL FIELDEN.

April 17 Friday. K——'s taste is absolute; I just wish he would sometimes give it a day off. He is the quickest reader I know and has a lightning perception about everything. On occasion a first-class wit. Asked by a man at a house-party whether he should start an action for slander, the offensive statement being that whenever he went to Paris he made a bee-line for a brothel, K—— said: " You, my dear sir, may or may not succeed. The bee will certainly get heavy damages ! "

Herbert Johnson, after long consideration, approves my idea of a grey bowler for the shows. Whether silver ribbon or black is to be decided when the hat is built.

Bob Leaver, my friend and doctor, very full of a posh wedding he had been to to-day :

R. H. L. The bridesmaids were the handsomest lot of young women I've ever seen.

J. A. Better than Mr. Cochran's young ladies?

R. H. L. They *were* Mr. Cochran's young ladies.

Lunched with James Greig, art-critic of *The Morning Post.* Looks about fifty-six and is actually seventy-five. One of the Greigs of Angus and of the same original stock as Grieg the composer. Or so Jimmie tells me. George Mathew says that Grieg's talent must have come from the Norwegian side of the family: " It is a biological impossibility for Scotland to produce a composer. MacDowell is an American, or sounds like one, and anybody called Mackenzie or Macfarren is obviously a Jew ! " James told me in his most dour manner a story illustrative, said he, of Angus laconism. The colloquy is between a father, with whom a neighbour has lodged a complaint, and his son milking in the byre.

FATHER. Aye, Jock ! A fine thing ye've dune to me again.

SON. What have I dune the noo, Dad ?

FATHER. Ye've bairned ane of Thamson's dochters.

SON (*looking up from his milking*). Which ane ?

April 18
Saturday.

MORNING CONCERT
of
RECORDED MUSIC
by
FIVE FAVOURITE COMPOSERS

JOCK DENT
APRIL 18th, 1936

1.	Gigue for Strings	*Baldassare Galuppi.*
2.	Nautical Moments . . .	*Charles Dibdin.*
3.	Overture to Stradella . .	*Friedrich von Flotow.*
4.	Two Tudor Madrigals . .	*period circa Henry VIII.*
5.	Concerto for two Violins and Orchestra	*J. S. Bach.*

This programme was performed by Jock on records he brought before I got up this morning. Does anything strike

the reader? I will make it easier by saying that a Claribel record was sought for high and low. In vain.

April 19 *Sunday.* "Sweet heaven, keep me in temper: I would not be mad!" It would take Lear's vocabulary to deal with some of my correspondents. Here's one sends me a play to read with a demand to be informed as to its theatrical possibilities. Including the stage directions it takes exactly four minutes to read. Yet I must be patient. It's only that our neuroses are different. I think I am going insane; they think they are keeping all right. *The Times* to-day prints two newly discovered letters of Carlyle whose neighbour at No. 4 Cheyne Row appears to have kept poultry, macaws, etc. "I have never in my life come athwart a tract of miserable grievances at once so contemptible and so intolerable, about which, except to men of delicate character, and acquainted like yourself with sedentary and studious ways, it is worse than useless to speak or to appeal." I have never known the point about nerves to be better made. What, to the sufferer, is a sky full of locusts the size of vultures is, to the onlooker, less than the buzzing of a gnat. But there are compensations. Nobody is more moved than I am at *The Times* Active Service In Memoriam Notices. Yet nobody could be quicker to spot the absurdity of "In memory of our darling, beloved Mamma who flew away, etc., etc."

I wish this weather would fly away. Wet and cold, without any sentiment of spring. Oh to be out of England now that April's here! Played golf this morning with the new assistant at Thorpe Bay. Enormous hands, feet big enough for two policemen, leggy like a colt, he drives some 300 yards and should make a golfer some day. At present he is too loose and, as he rightly says, needs a bit of stomach to play his shots against. When he lets out, is inclined to swing round and face the wicket-keeper. Thanks to 3 twenty-yard putts and 2 dead stymies he beat me by 4 and 3, conceding 2 bisques. Am I coming back to health and form? What a pity Lear didn't play golf! A round a day with Kent would have made all the difference.

April 21 *Tuesday.* Letter from a bookseller in Hobart, Tasmania, asking why he cannot sell a copy of Hugh Edwards's *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's, Crack of Doom* and *Helen between Cupids*: " Everybody thinks them delicious and nobody will buy them." I have worked like a black to interest the public in H. E., have made speeches about his books at *S.T.* Book Exhibitions, and written a preface to one of them. But there would appear to be certain literary ponds at which the horse-minded reading public just will not drink even if you shove them into the water up to the neck. My bookseller from down under is obviously an amusing cove:

> Strictly speaking I should have a row of asterisks here, for I have just put the potatoes on to cook. I think I must get an asterisk key on this machine. It would be so useful in creating atmosphere. For instance: just a few little dots, and immediately the reader imagines a tropic night heavily scented with flowers in season, a sickle moon hanging in a sky of velvet (though how this interesting feat is accomplished, not even the combined forces of Sir James Jeans, God and H. G. Wells, could probably tell us), languorous embraces and sighs which tear the heart out of you. Yes. I shall certainly get an asterisk.
>
> Now as to the potatoes: I am writing this in the week-end and at my shack which is situated " down the river." This is the equivalent, I imagine, to the " seaside " if you live at Ealing, and " Brighton " if you don't. Probably my geography is at fault. Naturally I do my own cooking and I don't mind owning up that I'm a bit of a dab at spuds. There is a heavy sou'west wind blowing and great square-rigged clouds are scooting across the sky, and not along the ground as you might imagine, since this is the Southern Hemisphere. Altogether, the only things wrong with the day are my split infinitives and other bad grammar.

April 23 *Thursday.* The *D.E.* cuts out a sentence in which I deprecate the use of the word " bum." On the other hand it cheerfully prints a quotation from Miss

Radclyffe Hall: "He had taken her almost reverently, pressing her down on the fertile soil as though on some primitive pagan altar." With my comment: "I do not know how Norwegian sailors do their love-making, but I doubt very much whether at primitive moments the pagan altar looms largely even in the Norse mind." Jock tells me that there is a subtle difference between fornication and bums. You may write about the former and photograph the latter—see any modish corset advertisement. Whereas to mention the second is as great a breach of taste as to photograph the first.

April 24 *Friday.* In a royal rage. Wrote an article on Taking Risks. Differentiated between the risk of being knocked on the head by a flying chimney-pot, the risk of competing for the Schneider Trophy or trying to beat Malcolm Campbell's record, the necessary, unavoidable risk taken by miners and firemen. Should children climb walls and trees? Would one stop them trying hands, feet and nerve on the Pillar Rock or Napes Needle? Should the speed of motoring be cut down to thirty miles an hour by mechanically stopping down the engine? What in the near future is to prevent the owners of baby-aeroplanes from committing suicide in one's back-garden morning, noon and night? Very regretfully the *D.E.* declined to print this article, on the grounds that, five London schoolboys having been killed recently during a walking-tour in the Black Forest, somebody might take action for libel! It appears that you may not have an article on the care of children in general if there has been, say, a bathing accident at a school treat. Or on What a Ship's Captain must Look Out For if some liner has just struck an iceberg. But you *may* have an article on either subject if there has been nothing in the news to call it forth. In which case your article, having no topical interest, will not be accepted. In other words there is *no* time at which one can write about the care of children or vigilance at sea. What an ass is the law, and what donkeys are lawyers!

Minor rages. The Wireless Commentator at the fight last night between Petersen and McAvoy told us it had lasted

exactly one hour. " Fifteen three-minute rounds and *fifteen* one-minute intervals."

" Callisthenes " writes in to-day's *Times*: " S.V.P. stands for the perhaps most widely known phrase in the French language, *S'il vous plait*." Then why not spell it correctly ?

An ass writes me from Cheltenham that he intends performing Norman McKinnel's *The Bishop's Candlesticks*. As the plot is lifted bodily from *Les Misérables* do I think the owners of Hugo's copyright are entitled to take action against him ? But why bother me ? What is the Society of Authors for ? Hasn't he heard of St. John Ervine ? Yesterday I read an article entitled " Mainly about Panthers." Why not give St. John something for his " Mainly about the Play " column ?

Am horribly bored by the prospect of having to go from Southend up to town to-night to the Gate Theatre to see a play called *Parnell* and, according to *The Times*, all about Mrs. O'Shea.

April 25 *Saturday.* Last night's play fine and really moving. Wonderful performance of Gladstone, made up to look like a composite picture of Kruger, Ibsen and Wagner. Or say a whiskered Queen Victoria.

Good, amusing article in *The Times* on that jaded repository, the Paris Opéra. Garnier's masterpiece is dead-and-alive, which at least is a better fate than that of the composer in whose honour it was built, for Meyerbeer is dead without the alive. Are French audiences still *émotionnés* by the famous tenor solo, " *Plus blanche que la blanche hermine*," Scribe's equivalent of the English Tommy's " Wash me in the water that you washed your dirty daughter, etc., etc." ?

Darwin in this issue writes his best golf article for years. All about Padgham's wonderful win in the Silver King Tournament. At the beginning of the third round A. J. Lacey had established a lead of nine strokes over Padgham, and was leading the field by six strokes. In this round Padgham got the whole lot back by doing a 66 against Lacey's 75, to win in the end from Cotton by one stroke. Lacey's last round was " a miserable thing to see." Missed 3's at the 10th and 12th

sent him " irretrievably to his doom," and the whole round was " a dismal ending to a brilliant beginning." Actually his score was 76, exactly my gross score to-day against Winsor. I suppose Lacey was as much ashamed of his score as I was proud of mine, which is the right and proper difference between the pro and the amateur. Winsor to-day made me a present of a driver, the most beautiful wooden club I have ever handled.

April 26. *Sunday.* It occurred to me late yesterday that in my *S.T.* article I had spelt the phrase " daughter-worship " without a hyphen. Should I spend one and sixpence, or whatever it is, on a 'phone call. Or shouldn't I? Decided not to. The result is that some fool of a proof-reader changes the perfectly good sentence:

" All the daughter worship is mere fetish "

to:

" All the daughter worships is mere fetish."

A proof-reader is a person who can only read one word, or at most two, at a time. If he came across:

" Then nightly sings the staring owl,
To-whit;
To-who, a merry note . . ."

he would at once change " to-who " into " to whom."

April 27 *Monday.* The English Press has the freedom of everything except speech. Here is Miss Lejeune in to-day's *Observer* on the subject of *These Three*, the film adapted from the American play called *The Children's Hour*:

> The subject of the play was the havoc wrought in a girls' school by a malicious lie whispered by a pathological youngster to her grandmother. The lie was about the supposed unnatural affections of two young schoolmistresses for each other—a subject which would seem automatically to exclude *The Children's Hour* from the attentions of the civilised film producer.

And here is Sydney Carroll:

This play has, I understand, been refused a licence by our English censor but upon grounds which have been completely eliminated from the screen. These reasons (associated with practices popular with the ancient Greeks) would, had they been permitted in the picture, have aggravated the tension beyond endurance.

How much better is the blunt American way! The *New-Yorker* says simply: "This is a fine play about two schoolmistresses accused of Lesbianism by a brat." If ever the play is done over here it will, I presume, be the usual highbrow tragedy produced by some earnest lady from Prague. And if it *is* done, I shall immediately weigh in with my shy trifle about two housemasters rumbled by some cute little beast of twelve.

April 28 *Tuesday.* In Hesketh Pearson's admirable book on Labouchere I find this corroboration of the "footsteps" incident in my Poltergeist story:

In his bachelor days Labouchere had taken a house, No. 2 Bolton Street, where a man had recently cut his throat. "I used this as a successful argument to obtain a reduction in the premium that was demanded." The house consisted of a basement and three floors. In the basement were the kitchen and scullery, on the ground-floor was a dining-room in which he used to sit, on the first floor were two drawing-rooms (in one of which the man had cut his throat); he slept on the second floor and his valet and two maids occupied the rooms on the top floor. One night he came home late and sat reading in the dining-room. The servants had retired to bed long before and the house was quite silent. Suddenly, at about 2 a.m., a terrific shindy broke out in the kitchen beneath him. It sounded as if all the plates and pots and pans were being thrown about the room. At first he thought it must be one of the servants on the rampage; then he wondered whether it was a burglar who had broken in and got drunk; or possibly the cat in one of its darker moods. He dismissed the last on the ground that in no conceivable mood could a cat play football with the pots and pans. As his curiosity was aroused and the noise continued, he determined to go down and see what was

happening. Taking the precaution to heat the poker, he descended to the basement with a candle in one hand and the poker in the other. As he approached the kitchen the noise suddenly subsided and when he entered it there was not a sign of anything having been disturbed. He inspected the scullery with the same result and then went upstairs to bed.

This performance was repeated frequently, varied by another of a still more sinister nature. Sitting in the dining-room in the small and quiet hours, he would often hear what sounded exactly like a man ascending the stairs from the kitchen, crossing the hall and going on to the upper storeys. He could hear each footstep distinctly and the creak of the stairs beneath it. The first time it happened he took no notice, thinking it might be the valet going to bed late; but the next time, the moment he heard the footsteps on the basement flight, he went into the hall and waited for the nocturnal walker. The moment he appeared in the hall the footsteps ceased. Seeing no one he returned to the dining-room and instantly the sound continued. Every time he opened the door there was silence; every time he shut it the man pursued his journey across the hall and up to the floors above.

This happened many times, and, taken in conjunction with the fairly regular game of crockery-football in the kitchen, he thought he had better have the drains and pipes inspected. The plumber reporting that all was in order, he carried his investigations into the next-door house, with no more success: peace reigned throughout the night in the house of his neighbour, whose drains and water-pipes were also in excellent condition. For some time he did not mention the disturbance to his servants, who might have left in a panic, but one morning, after a particularly rowdy night in the basement, he asked the valet whether he had heard anything.

" I suppose that you have heard the footsteps," said the valet.

" What do you mean ? "

" We all hear the steps; they come up to our floor and then stop. The maids say that it is the man who cut his throat, but I don't believe in such nonsense."

Nor did Labby believe in such nonsense. Though provided with enough phenomena to please the greediest bogy-believer, he would not fall back on a cheap and convenient

solution. "There must be some explanation for these noises," he affirmed; "but because I could not hit on it, I am not going to believe that the spirit of a man who cut his throat in the house came back to the premises after death to rattle the pots and pans and to take exercise by stalking up the stairs."

April 29 *Wednesday.* Millionaires-to-be spend their early years picking up thousands of pins. Potential astronomers spend their infancy with eyes glued to sixpenny telescopes. I myself wrote lengthy dramatic criticisms, complete with French quotations, long before I had entered any theatre. Last night was the 21st anniversary of Leslie Henson's first appearance at the Gaiety Theatre. This is a buffoon of genius. Ask Leslie to poke fun at the seaside fortune-teller. Easy. Or make game of your Harley Street psycho-analyst. Easier still. Or take the mike out of the Sphinx. A sitter. Our buffoon has one question for the lot: "Why must you be so ut-ter-ly absurd?" I have been trying for fifteen years to do justice to Leslie, and the nearest I have ever been able to get was some seven years ago on the occasion of the production of *Follow Through*: "Leslie Henson will, in moments of ecstasy, look at you out of eyes bulging like those of a moth which has eaten too much tapestry." Only, of course, the next minute he will be looking like a goldfish somebody has forgotten to put back into its bowl, or a tortoise imprudently come out of its shell. Since our collection of pet animals first appeared on the Gaiety stage, it or he has taken part in some seventeen musical comedies. It is an open secret of this trade that however good the "book," it is the business of the principal comedian to make it better. I suspect our Leslie's brain to have proved the female to a score of librettists' souls. Have librettists souls? Don't be so utterly . . . But that's another story. The point is that wit springs eternal in the Hensonian breast. "Let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them." But Hamlet was not thinking of musical comedy, or his advice would have been fatal. W. S. is always said to be universal; it is certainly odd how, over and over again, he seems to fit the case. Alas,

poor Yorick! But don't we feel in our bones that Y's gibes, gambols, flashes of merriment and all the rest of it were something more than smoking-room stories? Leslie is another Yorick. In all the many plays I have seen him in I have never known him joke nearer the knuckle than good table-manners permit.

I took my doctor, his very pretty wife and an agreeable fellow called Birkenshaw, who knows about motor-cars, to the show, L. H. having very kindly given me a box. Took them on to supper at the Savoy, where Mrs. Calthrop, Noel's stage-designer, joined us in a ravishing nondescript costume. Also John C. Wilson, Noel's clever business-half. No change out of ten quid. Hooray! Perhaps this is the place to say that I believe that I have attained solvency. If this is really so, it is the first time since I came of age.

April 30 *Thursday.* I see from *The Times* that Vivian Gooch has died, at the age of eighty-four. Gooch was probably the greatest horseman of all time. As the driver of a single harness horse he had no equal. He would drive no animal that was not royal, or capable of assuming royalty at his hands. The last time I saw him drive was at Richmond Show shortly after the war, at the time of the Roderick Dhu affair, fully described by me in *Kingdoms for Horses*. He was a great dandy, with wonderful boots and gloves, and his figure to the end was that of a stripling.

May 2 *Saturday.* I asked the steward at the Golf Club to-day if he had attended the boxing-match at Westcliff last night. He said No, he never went to boxing-matches, preferring to listen-in to them on the wireless! The M.C. last night boasting that one of next week's attractions would be a fellow 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing over 13 stone, a voice behind me said moodily: "'Is fahver's a jockey!"

May 4 *Monday.* Have now perfected a technique for enduring bad plays. I hypnotise myself into a fakir-like state of insensibility, lean back and view the proceedings with an eye glazed like a breakfast tongue.

May 5 Tuesday. Leo said to-day: "Nobody has any use for Communism except people with enormous incomes or no income at all. It's a luxury for the one and a necessity for the others!"

Reviewed to-day two witty books—Angela Thirkell's book on Harriette Wilson and a new novel by Stella Gibbons. Harriette is writing about a noble lord who set out for Brighton at the head of a procession which included her sister Sophia. Viscount Berwick led the way "in a magnificent equipage drawn by four milk-white horses, or four of raven black, *I forget which.*" Stella Gibbons gives her heroine a platinum wrist-watch "of so fiercely modernist a design that it suggested a short story by Ernest Hemingway."

May 6 Wednesday. From the *Hollywood Reporter*:

"With the history of the stage studded with plays built around Napoleon, it has remained for R. C. Sherriff to take the last six years of the Corsican's life, his intimacy with Jeanne De Casalis, and write a drama that will live in Napoleonic bibliography."

Jeanne, who showed me this, is as pleased as Judy about it!

May 7 Thursday. Here is a play written by a little Australian girl whose grandfather asks my advice. I am replying that plenty of pencils and paper should be left lying about, with perhaps a toy theatre for a Christmas present. But no explicit encouragement, which freezes talent and develops self-consciousness:

THE AGREEABLE WIFE

SCENE I

In the forest.

PRINCE. Will you marry me?

JOAN (*a peasant girl*). I am only a peasant girl but I consent.

Both walk away together.

You can hear a faint sound of music then it dies slowly away.

SCENE II

THE WEDDING

Joan is dressed in white and has an autumn-coloured bouquet.

They are heading for the Castle. The Prince is waiting at the gate.

After Wedding.

VOICES. Make way for the Prince and Princess.

Meanwhile the Princess gets a daughter.

PRINCE. Can I take her?

PRINCESS. Yes. (*He never lets the princess see her.*)

She gets them a Son, but the Prince does the same to him.

SCENE III

Joan goes back to her home in the Wood.

In the forest, Joan hears voices.

HERALDS. The Prince is to be married to-day!

JOAN. I wonder who he is marrying?

That moment a messenger came.

MESSENGER. The Prince bids you come to his wedding feast to-night.

SCENE IV

When Joan arrived at the Palace, she saw his bride.

JOAN. I wish you the best of luck!

PRINCE. Let me introduce to you your *daughter*!

JOAN. My lovely daughter.

PRINCE. And there is your son in the crowd.

JOAN. Oh! my son.

PRINCE. Now Joan, I have been not very nice to you, but I was seeing if you were agreeable and I think you are the most lovely wife in the world.

JOAN. I am very happy to have my husband, my daughter and my son.

All start kissing.

CURTAIN

May 8 *Friday.* Edgar Jepson said this at lunch to-day in that thin, dry voice of his which compels belief, or at least ensures the willing suspension of disbelief: "My brother has a dentist who takes an hour and twenty minutes to extract a tooth. He has timed him. After the local anæsthetic has worn off my brother says in a bored voice 'Go on!' When the operation is over he has a brandy-and-soda and goes to a race-meeting."

May 10 *Sunday.* "Atticus" in to-day's *S.T.* writes of Arnold Bennett that he "possessed no power of release from the methodical brain that noted great events and unimportant trifles with the same relentless thoroughness.

Every night he wrote up his diary, recording the food, the cutlery, the wines, and the quality of the cigars at dinner. He had the soul of a poet and the instinct of an accountant." The last word should be " diarist." When I read the diary of a Keats it is his porridge and not his poems that I want him to write about.

Lunched with George Mathew at Great Fosters. Lobster and cold beef excellent, Cheshire cheese soapy and tasteless, a charming bottle of Meursault and an excellent cigar. And now I come to think of it I forgot to drink the brandy which, owing to the footling drink-laws of this country, one had to order an hour too soon. This year's show of pink tulips completely ruined by mixing them up with a lot of light-blue stuff—a horrid, Edwardian clash of colour. Garden chairs, too, of pale heliotrope ! Some amusing hedge and tree trimming just before you get to the archery ground—two shillings for half-an-hour. George said the place should be advertised as " A Topiarian Paradise for Toxophilites."

May 14 *Thursday.* After *The Fortnight in September* Sherriff's new novel *Green Gates* has much disappointed me. Brother Edward, who has been reading both, sends me this:

THE WEEK-END IN NOVEMBER
by Bxb Sxxrrxxf

Mrs. Hammond went to the sitting-room window and drew the curtain aside. As she did so, the last two of the rings, from which the curtain was suspended, slipped off the end of the pole. For the past eighteen months, every time Mrs. Hammond had drawn aside the curtain, the last two rings had slipped off the end of the pole. She had often asked her husband, John Hammond, to fix them securely; but he was so busy at the bank. And it was too late now; for John had gone to meet their week-end visitors—Sophia Armstrong (Mrs. Hammond's sister) and her husband Walter Armstrong—and the curtain-pole was much too high for her to reach, and Mrs. Truman, from next door, had borrowed the steps. Mrs.

Hammond, a trifle flurried, looked out of the window. It was raining. The two grey ribbons of road climbed up the sides of Streatham Common, joining at the top of the hill. Somewhere far away to the right stood the Crystal Palace; you could see it on a clear day, she had been told. But not at four o'clock, on a Saturday afternoon in November, when it was raining, surely! It always *did* rain, about four o'clock, at Streatham, on a Saturday afternoon in November. That was nothing unusual, and Mrs. Hammond scarcely noticed it; but what she fully realised was the fact that her two visitors were a quarter of an hour late. For the last five years, the Armstrongs had always been punctual. They came annually for a week-end, from Sutton, where they lived. As a rule it was about this time—the middle of November; but one year it had been towards Christmas; and another, even as early as the last week in August. And Mr. Hammond always went to meet them. How the Armstrongs got from Sutton to Streatham, Mrs. Hammond never quite knew. By the Green Line, Underground or bus (there were no trams all the way, she thought), or by train, stopping at the dingy little Streatham station? She had often meant to ask her husband—but then, John was always so busy at the bank.

Mrs. Hammond sighed, and re-arranged the curtain, pulling it rather sharply, on account of the two dropped rings. She turned and glanced round the sitting-room. Yes, it was tidy and clean, except for the hearth, which would do with a brush-up, and the fire, which needed another piece of coal. She rose from the grate and gazed at herself in the oval mirror above the mantel-shelf. A slight, little woman she was, wisp-haired, flat-bosomed, old before her time. Could she have looked like this, she wondered, when John Hammond had asked her . . . ? She roused herself and went into the kitchen. Everything was all right there, too—the kettle on; the teapot warming; a pound of beef sausages in the frying-pan, pricked with a fork and ready for cooking. Would one pound be enough for four? Well, she would have the small one herself. Last year she had given them salmon—she remembered the brand, *Blood-Red* it was called—and with a bit of cucumber

and a lettuce, and salad-dressing for those that fancy it, why, you might almost think . . . But Sophia had said she wasn't hungry; so sausages would be a change this time. Mrs. Hammond returned to the sitting-room. The bread and butter was ready cut; she had emptied the *Casta Diva* pears into a glass dish, and the chocolate cake looked fresh. Yes, everything was ready . . . so perhaps she might . . . just rest a bit . . . before they . . .

" Are you asleep, Margie ? We've been knocking these last five minutes." Mrs. Hammond woke with a start at the sound of her husband's voice calling through the front window. She pulled herself together, tidied her wisps of hair, straightened her ill-fitting blouse and hurried to the door. Sophia Armstrong was in possession of the porch. She was a tall, buxom woman, overbearing and pretentious, constantly wavering between real pity and an assumed affection for her elder and less prosperous sister.

" How are you, Margaret, dear ? " she cried. " We've had such a dreadful journey—there was a Carnival on in Sutton—such crowds—it took us an age to get through —I'm afraid we're rather late—but John met us—isn't it wet ! "

" Is it raining now ? " enquired Mrs. Hammond. " Do please come in, won't you ? "

" Don't stand there all day, Walter," ordered Mrs. Armstrong. " And wipe your feet well ! "

Walter Armstrong obeyed, and the two men entered the house. John Hammond—an irritable man, with red hair and a loud voice—was clerk at the Branch Bank in Streatham. He had been there some years, and would never rise higher than his present position. This he knew, but tried to hide it from his wife. Periodically he would tell her that perhaps, next year, they might think of moving into a larger house. But the removal had never taken place, and Mrs. Hammond was inwardly thankful. John was fond of his wife in his own peculiar way, but he bullied her now and then, referred to her jocularly as " the problem," and was secretly a trifle ashamed of her.

Walter Armstrong was a big, bluff fellow, Manager of the Co-operative Stores, Secretary of the Bowls Club, Treasurer of the R.A.O.B. (Sutton Lodge), intimidated by nothing in this world save his wife, Sophia.

They took their places at the table and started the meal. Mrs. Armstrong's eyes wandered round the room, and lighted on the luckless curtain.

" Your little place don't alter much, does it ? " said she.

" No," replied Margaret, wincing; " it's much the same as ever."

" Don't you find it terribly awkward without a servant ? " asked Sophia. " How you manage to do it all yourself beats me."

" I suppose I've got used to it by now," said Mrs. Hammond, with her perpetual sigh.

" You ought both to come and see *us*, sometime," said Mr. Armstrong cheerily. " It would do you no end of good. Our roses were a sight last June. I'm a pretty busy man, you know, these days—what with the Bowls and the Buffaloes—but I daresay I could spare you a couple of days."

" Yes, we should like to," said Mr. Hammond.

" It would be very nice," added Margaret.

Every year this same invitation was vaguely issued; but as the date was never definitely fixed, nothing ever came of it. Every year Mr. Hammond said they should like it very much, and Margaret added that it would be very nice; but the Hammonds had never yet been to Sutton.

" And how are the children, Sophie ? " asked Margaret.

" Oh, they're all right—growing up, now, you know. Amy has left the Roneo and gone into the new Beautician Parlour in Bond Street. It's very fashionable, I understand. I get all my own toilet requisites through her."

" Indeed ? " said Margaret, quickly hiding her hands under the table.

" And Jack ? " enquired Mr. Hammond.

" Oh, Jack has taken a car down to Brighton this afternoon." (Jack was a motor salesman.) " An important hockey match, he told us."

" Young people want to enjoy their week-ends, nowadays," remarked Mr. Armstrong.

" It's only natural," said Mr. Hammond.

" Quite," said Mrs. Hammond; and the conversation flagged.

" Another sausage, Walter ? " suddenly roared Mr. Hammond.

" No more for me, thank you, John," answered Mr. Armstrong.

" Sweets, then ? "

" Never touch 'em."

" Perhaps your wife and Margaret *do*," said Sophia to her husband. " Please pass the cake."

" You'll smoke a cigar, Walter, I'm sure," said John.

" I wouldn't refuse that, John," replied Walter.

And the oily smell of cheap cigars soon filled the sitting-room.

" What are you going to do with us to-night, Margaret ? " asked Walter.

" I thought we might all go to the Pictures," Mrs. Hammond answered. " There's one at the Paradise—it's good on the placards—*The Gaucho's Dream*, they call it."

" Featuring who ? " demanded Sophia.

" I *did* see," said Margaret. " Rodrigo somebody."

" Then we'd better go," yawned Mrs. Armstrong. " It might pass the time."

The picture was of the pseudo-pampas order, manufactured in Essex, and enlivened by raucous cries in faulty Spanish. Mrs. Hammond was thrilled. . . .

" It must be nice to live in the country like Walter and Sophie," said Mrs. Hammond to her husband, some two hours later, when they were going to bed.

" Well, perhaps next year," said John, " we might think of moving into a larger house."

After breakfast, Walter asked, " What are you going to do with us this morning, Margaret ? "

" Well," replied Mrs. Hammond, " I thought, as it's stopped

raining, we might all go up to the ' Rookery'; you remember, at the top of the Common. They've altered it a lot since you were here last time—you won't know it again—and they've built a little hut just outside for ices and refreshments. I think it's better than the rose-garden in Battersea Park now."

Mrs. Hammond stopped, rather abashed at having made a speech.

" A pity you can't come with us," said Mrs. Armstrong; " but, of course, you have the dinner to . . ."

" Oh, but I can," interrupted her sister. " I've arranged with Mrs. Truman for her to see about that."

" And who is Mrs. Truman ? " asked Sophia.

" The wife of the signalman from next door. He's on duty all day to-day, so Mrs. Truman is free. She's such a nice woman."

" Oh," sniffed Mrs. Armstrong. " Then perhaps we might go, to pass the time."

Mrs. Hammond writhed. That was twice her sister had said it ! What was there to complain of, *this* visit ? Sophie had eaten two sausages, once pears and twice cake. And then, *The Gaucho's Dream* ! Why did she come at all, if she couldn't try to be friendly ?

Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong were in the passage, waiting for Margaret, who had vanished suddenly.

" Where's ' the problem ' ? " bawled out John Hammond.

" It's all right," said Margaret, coming out of the kitchen. " I only went to leave the back-door key on the nail just inside the window, so that Mrs. Truman can let herself in."

" I wish you would learn how to entertain visitors," said her husband, in as near as he could get to a whisper. " You're asleep when they arrive, running all over the place while they're here—and I suppose you'll have one of your crying fits, after they've gone. Really ! "

" I'm sorry, John," said Margaret, crushed. " I'm quite ready now."

When they were outside, Mr. Hammond relieved the tension, slightly, by saying, " We'll walk up to the ' Rookery.' It'll save us fourpence, and give us an appetite for dinner.

Come along, Margie—best foot forward ! " At the corner of the street they passed a small newsagent's.

" What Sunday paper do *you* take ? " Sophie asked John. " At home, we like to have them all. Walt is fond of the *People* or the *News of the World*, but Jack swears by *Reynolds*. If you ask me *my* opinion, I prefer the *Referee*; it's more—you know—out of the common. Yes," she repeated, " we take all the Sunday papers at Sutton."

" What's Amy's line ? " enquired John.

" The *Pictorial*, if anything," replied Mrs. Armstrong. " But there, Amy don't read much at all," she added apologetically; " she hasn't the time, you see."

" Are we nearly there ? " puffed Mr. Armstrong. " I was never much of a hill-climber."

" Yes, we're nearly there," said Mrs. Hammond expectantly.

Slowly the four of them toiled up the hill, and at last they reached the " Rookery." It was shut !

" What about a drink before dinner, John ? " said Walter, when they had arrived at the foot of the Common again. " It's time I paid for something. A glass of port would do your wife good after the walk. Is there a decent pub round here ? "

" Yes, that one's all right, over there," said John. " And we haven't anything in the house, so we might as well. What about your own wife ? "

" I can drink in Streatham," interposed Sophia, " but in Sutton I dare not."

" We're not in Sutton now," said John, with a touch of malice, " so come along."

They entered the saloon bar, and Mr. Armstrong called for the drinks—a small port for Margaret, a *crème de menthe* for Sophie, a bass for John and a Guinness for himself. Mrs. Hammond sat on the edge of the red plush seat—trembling.

Dinner was over; Mrs. Truman had washed up and gone. How to get through the rest of the day ? There was draughts, of course, thought Mrs. Hammond, but that was a selfish

game. Then there was the " Religious Service " and the " Week's Good Cause " on the wireless. There might even be a classical concert—but the newsagent at the corner hadn't sent the *Radio Times* this week; besides, their wireless had been out of order lately. Somewhere upstairs, Mrs. Hammond remembered, there was an old table-tennis set—but she had a vague idea that it was broken. Anyhow, it would soon be time for afternoon tea, and then there was cheese and biscuits to lay for supper afterwards.

So they got through the rest of Sunday, somehow; as ninety per cent of folk in Streatham get through the rest of Sunday, somehow.

The following morning Sophie was at her liveliest. She forgot to glance at the two curtain-rings; she prattled away at breakfast; she beamed on her husband and was almost gentle with her sister. Sophia Armstrong was a happy woman, for Sophia Armstrong *was going home to Sutton* !

" Good-bye, Margaret," said Walter. "All good things come to an end, you know."

" Yes, Walter, I suppose they do," said Margaret. " Good-bye."

"Good-bye, John," said Walter. " We've had a grand week-end. Don't forget to visit us next year, say sometime in the summer, when our roses are at their best. We'll let you know."

" We should like to, Walter," said John.

" It would be very nice," murmured Margaret, mechanically.

" Good-bye, John, and all the best," said Sophie. "And good-bye, Margaret, dear. Pity about the 'Rookery,' wasn't it ? Never mind. And oh, if you ever want a new manicure set, Amy might be able to get you one half price. Ring her up."

" Thank you, Sophie," said Margaret; and she kissed her. " You'll see them on to the bus, John, or however they go, won't you ? "

" Of course, Margie—on my way to the bank," said John. " I'll be in for tea about five."

Margaret stood in the porch, and waved her hand to them, till they had turned the corner. Then she shut the front door and went into the kitchen. The week-end was over. She dropped into a chair and tried to think. How was it she always felt so flustered and unnerved when Sophie came? Why did she appear so foolish? Why could she never find a sensible word to say? With Mrs. Truman it was quite different; she was always at her ease with Mrs. Truman—and she was only a neighbour. Was it the same between other sisters? Why did this great relief come over her now?

And two big tears stole gently down the thin cheeks of Mrs. Hammond.

May 25 Monday. Sale at Sotheby's of Arnold Bennett's manuscripts and correspondence. Went expecting all the world to be there and saw nobody I knew. Fifty or sixty booksellers, looking like *commissaires-priseurs* out of a Balzac novel, bid unemotionally for incalculable treasures going at five or six pounds a bundle. Consider this:

> 11 Nov. 1895. I feel more sure than ever I did in my life before, that I can *write* in time and " make people care, too " as Hy. James says—though praps only a few people. Still, to have made fellow artists care, that is the thing! That is what will give ultimate peace of mind. Do you ever stand still and ponder: " Suppose after all, I am an artist, rather a fine one! But it can't be true. What am *I* that *I* should be an artist? Every dabbler thinks he is—till he learns better. And yet, and yet . . ." I have never been in love (wish to God I had, when I am struggling with a love scene!) but I imagine the joy of the artist when he first *knows* that he is an artist, is similar to the joy of the lover when he first knows that he is in love and loved; and the thought of both after the first scepticism has gone, is: " What the Hades have I done to deserve this ineffable happiness? " I have boasted to at least one person (another of my indiscretions) that I know I am an artist. I know no such thing. When I have read my first novel in print, I think I shall know. Yes, I am well aware that this farrago coming from a youthful person who has nothing to show, nothing done, is absurdly self-conscious and egotistic . . .

It is monstrous and, to me, unthinkable that letters of this quality should never be published because there is no public for them. But then, the public is insane.

I rescued a dozen letters by Allan Monkhouse, three by Montague, and three by George Mair.

Monkhouse writes in March 1910:

" *The Manchester Guardian,*"
3, *Cross Street,*
Manchester.
March 3, 1910.

DEAR MR. BENNETT,

I am very grateful to you, and I think we all shall be, for your notice of Montague's book. I haven't read the book yet but I don't think any other man could have written so penetratingly about Montague. You justify our pride in him and yet you are sufficiently independent; you don't follow in the cry a bit. We've seen your reference to him before, very much as—years and years ago, and when one never came across people who knew about Meredith—one chanced on a declaration by Stevenson or Henley that *Rhoda Fleming* or *Diana* was a work of genius. We are greatly proud of Montague and we worship him from afar. No man could be more loyal and cordial to his colleagues and yet he is curiously aloof. I remember talking to a man here, when I first came, about Montague and he said—" Yes, we've all had an unrequited affection for him." He is the most gentle and helpful person and yet there is that ruthlessness that you must detect. He is shy in manners and mentally, too. I think he is fearful, instinctively, of that precious egoism; he is determined to be himself. I can't conceive of his accepting or incorporating another man's idea. His wife affirms that he never reads anything and one could believe that he might fear to be swept away by a big influence; he must have started with a vast store of learning. But I don't think I can tell you anything about him; your criticism is first-rate and I take some credit for having helped to accomplish the incredible—an adequate review of Montague's first book.

Sincerely yours
A. N. MONKHOUSE.

Montague writes in February, 1922, apropos of a review by Bennett:

10 *Oak Drive,*
Fallowfield,
Manchester.
Feb. 21/22.

MY DEAR ARNOLD BENNETT,

Thank you kindly for the good word you give my brat, and especially for the faithful wounds. Don't I just know——afterwards—those smoky harshnesses, hang them ! The plague is that the kind of drunkenness in which they're written lasts till I've corrected and posted proofs. Still, I do struggle. I have a flickering hope that three people may understand this book for every two that could ever make anything of my other ones.

I expect A. N. M. was shy of asking you. I don't know. There was obviously some back-stairs-work going on behind my back, as there is always when one of us writes a book—it's like the days before Christmas in a large family. I wasn't told.

C. P. S. sends you thanks and kindest regards. He is in great form—works 50 per cent more than ever before, though he has only one eye now, and has given up wearing a hat on his nightly bicycle journeys to and from work. If he is not killed in the street we shall all be walking about looking for work, by the time he is 80, for we become more unnecessary every day, with him there to do all the work.

Don't the professors get that Saharan quality through not having absolutely to write things in such a way that people will want to read them ? It must be rather depraving to have a lot of helpless students planted before you daily, with no real liberty to hoot or go out if you are dull or have no real thing to say. It must be almost as bad as being parson in a jail. They don't get harried enough by the journalist's God-given vision of fat men in trains muttering " Bloody bilge ! " if ever he lets the thing down, and turning from him to the sound, juicy stuff about Bottomley and the Peels.

I will, surely, let you know when I get a chance of coming to London—chances very scarce lately. It would be most jolly to see you again.

Yours sincerely
C. E. MONTAGUE.

And Mair writes from *The Manchester Guardian* office (May, 1910):

> I had hoped to go to the King's funeral, which is the sort of thing a man who tries to get all the emotions he can out of life ought to do, but we are short-handed here at present, and as the writing of short leaders on subjects painfully dredged from the depths of the contemporary press is of more importance than the describing of things seen (which also is done much better by the other end of the wire) I sit where I am.

Last is the original Auto. MS. signed, of Bennett's review of Monkhouse's *Dying Fires*. The thought of all this lovely stuff perishing makes me sick at heart.

May 27 *Wednesday.* The Derby. Every now and again I get terrific hunches about this race. I had one in Humorist's year, and again in Felstead's, and did well on both occasions. I mean I had a fiver on each way. To-day I had the same hunch about Mahmoud, only stronger. The result was a Gobbo-like and disastrous colloquy with myself. "Bet," said my hunch. "Bet not," said my conscience. And so on. In the end and because, having turned the financial corner I no longer squander money, I only had a pound each way. Whereupon, of course, the brute romped home.

May 30 *Saturday.* The Great Day has arrived, and the International Horse Show opens at Olympia, with Ego showing at the first performance. Saw him in his box last night and he looked grand. Albert Throup says that if he gives his show, he can't lose. But I don't know, and the memory of last year's Olympia is very much with me this morning. Since waking have done everything possible to put the idea of winning out of mind. I have never had a success at Olympia, and to-day it is now or never. I have done all I can to discount the inevitable disappointment. I have been going about the house reciting: "Whate'er I prized, it ne'er was mine." I turned up Pinero's silly old *His House in Order* and read Hilary Jesson's speech about renunciation: "Nina, there are some people walking the earth who are

wearing a halo . . . the glow of it sustains them through pain and tribulation . . . who've been offered a sceptre and passed on. They are the people who have renounced. Nina, be among those who wear the halo." All morning I have been saying "James, be among those who wear the halo." Yet I confess to opening *Ego* at random to see if the gods were favourable. I opened it at page 237, and read: "Tried to reproduce Ralph Richardson's Bunyanesque manner, *and satisfied myself for the first time.*" And then of course I couldn't let well alone. Edward having sent me an old copy of Doran's *Table Traits*, I opened that at random to see if I could get the favourable omen confirmed. The passage I lighted on was St. Luke's "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say unto thee, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lower room." Not so good!

Ego won! Albert drove beautifully, and the horse put up a cool, collected, self-possessed show with plenty up his sleeve if any more had been wanted. The crowd quickly took to him, and he at once became the talk and sensation of the show. I was overwhelmed with congratulations, and not the perfunctory sort. R. G. Heaton, Bertram Mills, Nigel Coleman, Geoffrey Bennett, Edgar Henriques, George Lancaster, all the Blacks, Billy Heath, Ernest Hutton, and finally the judges themselves came up and said what a grand little horse Ego is.

Dinner, after which we watched the under 15.2 and over 15.2 novices, the winners of which and also the pony winners we meet on Monday night. This is the competition for the twenty-five guinea cup awarded to the best exhibit in the novice harness classes. First and second in each class must compete or forfeit their prize-money.

May 31 *Sunday.* It was Chesterton who commented on the fact that an age which has nothing to say should have invented the loud-speaker. The *S.T.* Special Correspondent on the *Queen Mary* writes: "The passenger list is

singularly undistinguished." The most advertised ship of all time and nobody to lug across except a film-star or two, a semi-actress or two, and half the Savoy Grill. The bilge poured out by the popular Press has been deplorable. Only *The Manchester Guardian* kept its head and dignity with a magnificent full-page drawing by Muirhead Bone.

June 1 *Monday.* Ego got third place in the championship to-night. Ten buggies in the ring meant that there was not space to loose him out. He wants a lot of room and the cramped ring unsettled him, so that in addition to going less high than usual he was unbalanced. The judges were perfectly right placing him where they did.

June 2 *Tuesday.* A day of good things.

A man apologising for having been laid out on the floor through drink for the greater part of the previous evening, Geoffrey Bennett said: "Nonsense, my dear fellow, you were the still life of the party!"

Selwyn Jepson's contribution to a discussion on really good earthly paradises: "A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, a book of verses, and NO THOU!"

At lunch A. D. Peters leaned across the table and said: "Tell us, James, how many *hippophiles* there are in the country."

Then this letter from Clifford Bax:

Piccadilly,
*W.*1.

MY DEAR JAMES,

The other night, when we met in the theatre, you seemed sincerely to second my wish that we should meet again and for longer than a moment. So now I am writing to ask you if you will dine with me (at Scott's in Piccadilly) on Wednesday or Thursday of next week: and then return here for a prolonged talk. I shall wear a Black Tie, because I always do of an evening, but if you hate such costume, come in anything you like except plus-fours. They are grotesque and will make us hideous in the eyes of posterity. You may not care for the opinion of posterity, but I am jealous for

the good name of the age which we both adorn so notably. Give my blessing, will you, to Jock?

Yours ever,
CLIFFORD BAX.

This crossing with an invitation from me I got another letter by the last post:

Piccadilly,
*W.*1.

MY DEAR JAMES,

For love of you I shall try to come to your party, but I am an old man and I rarely keep late hours: so, if I do not materialise at Antrim Mansions, you must imagine that I have fallen asleep on the couch.

Yours respectfully,
CLIFFORD BAX.

June 5 Friday. Two grand days. Yesterday I motored to Uttoxeter for the Staffordshire Show. Diamond, who behaved like a little pig at Olympia where he got reserve and should have been last, went with the utmost gaiety, mountains high in front and tucking his hocks under him. Was an easy second. Tulip, going a trifle soberly, was an unlucky third. Motored from Uttoxeter to Bury St. Edmunds where I was due to judge the Suffolk Show. Owing to the great influx of visitors had to share a room with Fred Leigh, whose snores put to shame the neophyte exploits of Max's Sir Rebus.

The Suffolk Show, this year at Stowmarket, is a beautifully organised affair. Lovely ground and stewarding perfect. I have a passion for judging, reinforced by a life-training in the theatre: I could not sleep if I thought I had been unfair to an actor and the same applies to a horse. Perhaps more so. I knew that the lady who had proposed me as judge at this show would have a pony in the first class, and it was only human to hope that it might win. But it couldn't, any more than I could put any living English actress above Sarah and Réjane. Blairavon Venus is a beautiful mare. But she is too long and lacks the pony looks and crisp pony action of Belle, wonderfully fined down and beautifully shown by Hardy. Motored to-night to Felixstowe, and staying at the

Felix where I can put the main building and two wings between Fred's room and mine. Grand, recuperative two days. If one or all of my employers really understood me they would give me " x " pounds a year plus a pony. I wouldn't sting them for price, and the extra sting in my articles would repay them a hundredfold. Nobody realises that if I hadn't the Buddha-like capacity to ignore the play and withdraw to Birmingham and muse about Tulip and Ego's prospects I should, on three evenings out of four, collapse with boredom, and one fine night find myself in the asylum. I am much more interested in what ponies are coming on than in what actresses are going off ! At the same time I realise I must not quarrel with my bread and butter. Also that they can't help being bread and butter actresses.

June 8 *Monday.* Abel Hermant used to call certain of his novels " Documents to Serve for the Reconstruction of Present-day Society." Here is something A. H. would have seized on as giving the " note " of to-day:

> This will be a pale-faced Ascot, a heavy-lidded, magenta-mouthed Ascot. That healthy, hockey-girl tan it took five years and several pints of olive oil to cultivate is out of date.
>
> Yesterday in a beauty parlour I watched what was being done for Ascot's sake, peeped through grey satin curtains, saw a leader of fashion have the brown layer of a three months' holiday in Cannes removed by a pack.
>
> It was not mud. More like a fresh fruit salad. It contained the juice of several pounds of crushed strawberries. Her hands were soaking in cream of lettuce leaves.
>
> Last week oranges and lemons removed a layer of Switzerland from her skin memory. Just raspberries remain to deal with that sun-soaked month at Biarritz, and she will be white enough for Gold Cup Day.
>
> This is the rest of the beauty news:
>
> Eyes and mouth will be the colour-focusing points of these fair-skinned lovelies.
>
> A new range of magenta shades in lipsticks, ending with an almost death-like fuchsia, is to be " released " for Ascot—not before, because of the risk of " piracy."
>
> Eye-lashes, coloured and lacquered, half an inch long,

made of hairs from a horse's tail, are sold in sets to match your Ascot dress. They are applied with waterproof, heat-proof adhesive. Toe-nails will not be seen.

Coloured, hand-embroidered stockings are this year's preference to the naked leg. A Malvolio yellow, shaded over to a bronze calf, seems to be the favourite.

Juvenal, thou shouldst be living at this hour!

June 9 *Tuesday.* Three days' show at Worcester. Too busy to go. Albert wires that Diamond won the novice class.

June 10 *Wednesday.* Diamond second in the open class.

June 11 *Thursday.* Still at Worcester. Albert wires Tulip won the big class.

June 14 *Sunday.* Two exciting days at Leicester. On the first day Hemingway's big horse rightly won the all heights class, All Trumps the recent winner in the open class under 15 hands at Olympia being placed second, and Tulip, who was throwing a temperament, an unsatisfactory third. Later in the afternoon Ego romped home in the novice class. Next day I had both Ego and Tulip entered but decided to keep the gelding fresh for the National Show on Tuesday. As the winner on the first day of this show cannot compete on the second this meant challenging the earlier decision and, of course, the odds on All Trumps winning again under the same judge were enormous. However, Tulip came out in her very best mood and went beautifully, with perfectly balanced action, and I have no doubt the owner of the other mare would say the same of his animal. Round and round they went, then a good straight show and then another prolonged trial round and round the immense ring. By this time the crowd had warmed up and was cheering both horses. Finally the judge lined them up and went over them for conformation, after which he pointed to Tulip. It was a great battle, and young Haydon, who drove his own mare, was extremely nice about it afterwards. Much nicer than I should have been.

June 15 *Monday.* Letter on the death of Chesterton from my old anonymous friend:

Sunday evening.

MISTER AYE-GATE, SIR

Two youngsters from Edinburgh that I have to cicerone next week will be sure to ask to see the Tower. This afternoon I stupidly forgot the tempest and set off to the Tower to find the times it is shown off at. By the time I reached Ludgate Circus on my way west again I was weary and turned into a church to rest. A man in the pulpit was making assertions that he seemed to think very fine and that I thought disconnected and that awoke no echo in me. The nonsense was more unbearable than the weariness and I turned away and leaned against a pillar by the door until it was over. In Fleet Street as there were much fewer people than usual I took the chance to examine the architecting. In a newspaper office, looking down at us unseeingly there was a face in shirt sleeves. Its owner stared unseeing I think because if he had not, he would have noticed the upturned face staring at him and turned away, or stared back so that I must turn away. Ah, I thought to myself, he should have taken ten minutes to walk in the Strand, it is always afternoon in the Strand and everybody has had a good dinner. The Strand is always warm, not literally speaking. If I could build a theatre I would think twice before I did not build it in the Strand. I soaked up the warmth gratefully walking along feeling comfortable. There were some placards halfway. Whose little Johnnie has fallen down a well now, I thought, and glanced at them. It was not little Johnnie. So that's what the *Express* face was staring at, us yokels walking idly, comfortably, while G. K. C. lay dead. It was much too young for such a man to vanish from this coil, 62 is the prime of a thinking person. I am desperately sorry. I never saw him, but thanks to this amazing wireless engine I heard him, this engine that speaks with so many voices. I did not understand much of what he said, it was too circumlocutory for an untrained brain. But what I understood I was grateful for. When I last heard him he said do not despise the Middle Ages tho' it is the fashion to, we went into the Middle Ages barbarians, we came out very much what we are now. Those were not his words of course. At the end he thrashed himself for not being greater, a Dante. He said Dante had

something to say but no communications, now that there were abundant communications, he, G. K. C. for one, had nothing to say. It was all as unlike the windy suspiration of forced breath of the man in the pulpit, or the false bonhomie of the face at the newspaper office, as could be. Two miserable lamps full of oil, the great lamp empty. It seems to me as great a public loss as I can remember. These thinking chaps are our real rulers, one mourns king or cardinal far less. I trust he did not know he was dying, he must have known he was in but the middle of his thinking life, if one does not think one does not live, so life begins when we begin to think, which is at about 25, which makes him really only young.

Yours trooly.

June 20 *Saturday.* The National Hackney Show, held this year at Worthing, has come and gone, and between them Ego and Albert have done what I have been trying to do for twenty-three years, i.e. again take first prize at this Show. My first appearance at what was then called the London Hackney Show was in 1913. I had bought an untried and unshown three-year-old filly called Rusper Maryan, and with her won first prize, both in hand and in harness. I remember thinking it quite easy and taking the success rather lightly. But I also remember Alexander Gemmell, who was sitting behind me in the Agricultural Hall at Islington, saying: " Man, whatever horses ye may own it may be twenty years before ye do this again ! " Actually it has been twenty-three years. Ego won his class in harness as easily as he did at Olympia. He also won the hand class and was awarded the Challenge Cup for the best young mare or gelding shown in hand. The only fly in the ointment was that he was placed reserve for the Novice Harness Championship which, by every law of God, man and horse he won all the way from Worthing to London. It is true that there was one animal of which we were very much afraid. This was Buttle's Blue Vision, of which that great Hackney authority, Geoffrey Bennett, had just written the following in the American paper *Sportologue*:

As Mrs. Henriques refuses to sell Viking, Nanette, her tiny pair and her scintillating little novice Fleetwood

The Author with Ego

Garnet, so also did our famous judge, Mr. F. W. Buttle, who is President-Elect of the Hackney Horse Society, refuse to set a price upon what I am convinced is one of the very greatest harness animals of all time. Mr. Buttle was the owner of both Lavendula and Shalimar when they won all their many championships in this country—but the mare which he now possesses is immeasurably grander than they. A bay with four white feet and standing about 15.2, she is sired by Courage's son Mersey Searchlight—the sire of Modern Maid and Nork Spotlight—and out of Wood Vision by Antonius. In conformation she is greatly like her exquisite half-sister, Modern Maid, but slightly more robust, while her forehand is even longer and she possesses wonderful personality, carrying her head aloft and her ears for ever forward, loving her job, and sailing on with a liberty and scope of action which is almost unique, combined as it is with very perfect placing of the hocks and fore-feet—in short a mare in many thousand, a certain champion—an actual world-beater ! There is no Hackney animal which has ever left this country for yours, save possibly the immortal Forest King, which could hold a candle to Mr. Buttle's mare, and her contests with Fleetwood Viking will be worth a fortune to behold !

Blue Vision, though winning her class in the morning fairly easily, disappointed. The mare was off colour and coughing when she left the ring, and when she came in for the Championship in the afternoon was clearly a sick animal. Owing to her cold she did not bridle, and poked her nose like a wild-goose. Bennett who was standing next to me at the ringside said: " My dear James, no living judge would put that mare, ill as she is and in her present condition, in front of your horse." But three judges, by a majority, did. After the Championship the mare was at once bundled to the vet., and made no further appearance at the Show. The indignation caused by the judges' decision was almost universal. Indeed there was so much talk that Ego acquired more fame in defeat than he would have done if he had been given his rightful due.[1]

[1] Geoffrey Bennett's account of these proceedings, published in the August number of *Riding and Driving*, was not available until later. Here it is:

Then Mr. Agate's Ego, attractive as he was last season, has yet made enormous improvement since, and now came out and charmed everyone

June 21 At dinner to-night, Monty delivered himself of the
Sunday. following harangue:

My dear James, you and I have known each other for a good many years, and I am very fond of you. But I am also a little anxious. You say your new book is good, and your horse has certainly done well. But try to realise, my dear fellow, that you won't always be on the crest of the wave. You may be another Samucl Butler, and after you are dead the reading public may discover *Responsibility*. And, of course, *Ego* and its successors may show you to be another Pepys. But, with great respect, I don't think so. Your diary is in every way inferior to Arnold Bennett's, and you are not the writer he was. My advice to you is to consolidate. You can't last for ever; we shall tire of you. The proper thing, in my opinion, is to take up a position like Saintsbury or Gosse and boom away once a week. Gosse did boomers in the *Sunday Times* for donkeys' years. Choose some nice little house near Godalming, to which people can make pilgrimages on Sunday afternoons. As the last man who knew Sarah

by reason of his gentlemanly appearance, handsome contour, and beautifully true, well-rounded and perfectly balanced action, so that he took first prizes wherever he was shown, namely, at Olympia, Worthing, Leicester, and the Royal, and he was also first and a cup winner at Worthing for the best mare or gelding shown "in hand"—altogether a most creditable performance for a little horse with an assured and brilliant future.

Sad to say, however, Mr. Agate's bay did not meet with such good fortune in his championship contests in harness. He was generally voted unlucky to stand below Mrs. Henriques' big chestnut mare, Nightingale, instead of being reserve to her Sir Garnet at Olympia, while at Worthing the placing of Ego below Mr. F. W. Buttle's Blue Vision, rightful winner of the over 15.2 class, for the novice championship was quite incomprehensible to over 90 per cent of those present.

I happen to be one of the very few who have been privileged to see Blue Vision in her true form and I unhesitatingly affirm that she will eventually prove to be a very great animal indeed. But at Worthing she was suffering from a very severe cold, with high temperature, and consequently gave no show at all, so that the decision was a truly lamentable one.

We met Blue Vision once again, at the Royal Lancashire in the Novice Class over 14 hands. The mare, being much improved, again got the decision which again was hotly debated. She is, it must be remembered, a hand and a half bigger than the horse, and the judge may have been influenced by the old boxing rule about good big 'uns beating good little 'uns. I felt in my bones that this was going to happen, and so did Albert. But we had made up our minds for the grand assault on Dublin, and Blackpool being on the way it seemed unsporting to funk it. And, by golly, we had our reward ! I will make no fuss, but set down the naked facts and let their stark grandeur speak for itself. On Saturday, August 8th, at the Royal Dublin Horse Show, Ego, a five-year-old bay gelding, the property of James Agate, beat Wensleydale

Bernhardt you will always have a steady if limited vogue. Shall we take our coffee in the drawing-room?

June 22 *Monday.* A North of England newspaper asking me which, in my considered opinion, are the six best living English actresses, I am replying:

Elisabeth Bergner
Lucie Mannheim
Grete Mosheim
Eugenie Leontovich
Elena Miramova
Tanzi Cutava.

By the same token, this morning I took up the latest autobiography entitled *Anonymous* (1871–1935) and, opening it at random, came across this passage:

With Elisabeth Bergner to the fore, big drama might be in demand again; the present era of the commonplace must

Madge for first place in the Open Class under 15 hands, and, on the same afternoon, was awarded the supreme harness championship. The other contestants in the championship class were the first-prize winners Mr. W. S. Miller's Beau Regarde and Mr. Bertram Mills's Knight of the Thistle and also Mr. Walter Briggs's Barcroft Belle, which for once in a way had had to take second place. Other animals in the show were Madge, Pollux and Mickey Mouse.

Ego's record up to date is as follows, all classes being novice except where otherwise stated. The list is full and complete. Ego took fourth prize at his first appearance at Weymouth, and was second in the Open Class at Penistone in 1935, during which year he was shown under 14 hands. In 1936 he was beaten in two classes, being placed second to Nanette at the Royal in the Open Class under 15 hands, and second to Blue Vision at the Royal Lancashire in the Novice Class all heights over 14 hands. In his proper class as a novice over 14 and under 15 hands Ego has never been beaten. His novice days are now over. Here is the list:

1935

4th: National Hackney Show.
1st: Worsley.
1st: and reserve for Cup Bingley.
1st: and Novice Cup, 1st (Open) Marton.
2nd: (Open) Penistone.
1st: Altrincham.

1936

1st: International Horse Show.
1st: Leicester.
1st: National Hackney Show. Also 1st and Challenge Cup in hand.
1st: Royal Agricultural Society of England. Also 2nd (Open).
2nd: Royal Lancashire (Open).
1st: and Supreme Champion Royal Dublin Horse Show.

come to an end with the revival of acting which I fancy she must inaugurate. We needed an awakening and nearly had it when *Noé* was produced, with its magnificent French star, but the Bergner brought the power of that dying art for just one moment as vividly to restoration as the coming of the Russian ballet brought the revival of dancing. A big drama actress without plays to fit her genius is sheer waste.

Like Rosa Dartle I want to know what proof Miss Bergner has given this country of being a " big drama actress." All she has done on the stage in two and a half years has been to scamper about in shorts—actually it was an exquisite performance—in one not very good play surrounded by a not very good caste which she had no difficulty in outshining. The author's suggestion that the drama in England needs a foreign artist to prod it into life is an insult to Miss Edith Evans, Miss Flora Robson, Miss Peggy Ashcroft, and Miss Gwen Ffrangçon-Davies who, in the same period, have appeared in pieces by Shakespeare, Tchehov, Congreve, O'Neill, Vildrac, Maugham, Gordon Daviot, and Hugh Walpole. Tosh is tosh, whether anonymous or not.

It may be said that Miss Bergner has been ill. One sympathises, of course. But the point about really great actresses is that they are never ill, and that when they feel like dying they take their death-beds to the theatre with them. Nor does your really great actress hang around until some popular playwright devises a masterpiece to fit her. When Sarah Bernhardt was waiting for the next made-to-measure play by Sardou she would turn on some terrific trifle by Racine or Dumas *fils*. Why has not Miss Bergner filled in with something by Ibsen, Tchehov, or other trifler? Within the same period Madame Pitoëff came over here for a fortnight and gave us three masterpieces—*La Dame aux Camélias*, *The Doll's House*, and Schnitzler's *Reigen* in which she played five characters—a prostitute, a servant-girl, a *femme du monde*, a dressmaker, and an actress.

I go back to my original point. Great boxers are always boxing and with different opponents. Great racehorses don't

run one race and then pack up. Great conductors do not conduct one opera for two and a half years. No dramatic critic could be considered great on the strength of one notice of *Escape Me Never*. Here I lay down a truth which must not escape anybody ever. Great actors possess rude health or the ability to carry on as though the health were rude. Great actresses act out of their exuberant vitality, and not out of the defeatist, poor-little-girl-in-a-plightism, which is the note of Miss Kennedy's Gemma.

Let me hear no nonsense about attacking a distinguished visiting actress. I am doing nothing of the kind. I am trying to protect distinguished home-bred actresses from the injury they sustain through over-praise, on insufficient evidence, of the foreign artist.

June 23 *Tuesday.*

Edward's Journey

The coffin came—a masterpiece of flummery,
Flashy outside, inlaid with cheapest lead;
A pallet soft, as bolster to the mummery
Of Edward resting his unwanted head.

They washed him first; and then, with snip-snap-snorum,
His nails were cut. In bib and tucker cosseted,—
Allons, c'est tout. Mais oui! High cock-a-lorum!
Into his narrow crib he was deposited.

He had ignored the churl who measured him,
Jibed at the undertaker's jewelled hand;
He had no friend who loved and treasured him
Save the Fagotto in a Fireman's Band.

Sechs Lieder lay serenely on his breast;
Seven un-Vocal Scores his hands caressed;
Into the coffin copyrights were flung,
Unbought, uncut, unnoticed, and unsung.

One hearse, one horse, no flow'rs, some *bonhomie*,
(Relatives venting *Vales*, much relieved),
All with an eye to strict economy,
"Which puts the lid on it," sighed Edward, grieved.

He lay quite still, rejoicing in the gloom
That had delivered him from Life's alarms,
Hoping the horse did wear a modest plume,
Doubting of Bach—but humming bars of Brahms.

He reached the Gates, and paused till Peter came,
Tendered his three-and-six with show of mirth;
Trusting, in Heaven it would be the same
For Bed and Breakfast, as upon the Earth.

But Peter spake, ridiculously proud:
"Of cash in hand we have sufficient hoard;
Please scan the notice on the entrance-board—
'No Hawkers or Musicians are allowed.'"

The Gates were shut, they echoed far and wide;
Sentence pronounced invited not to stay;
And Edward, though defeated, dignified,
Wrapping his shroud about him, went his way.

. . . . . .

Whither, oh wand'ring Spirit, wilt thou go?
Where shall thy all too fretful Ghost be laid?
Thy pilgrimage on Earth long over-stayed,
Thy presence in the Firmament *de trop*!

E. A.

June 24 *Wednesday.* Went to-night to the open-air performance of *Henry VIII*. Perhaps the point is not how much the play worsens by being acted out of doors, but how much sitting in a deck-chair is the better for something to look at and listen to. On principle I object to these Tudor Tattoos, and I was astonished to find myself thoroughly enjoying this one. Indeed the play completely took me out of myself. Even to the extent of forgetting my horses entirely, until, of course, we came to the famous

EGO ET REX MEUS.

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